

Gwadar Port: Serving Strategic Interests of Pakistan

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“The Indian Ocean area will be the true nexus of world powers and conflict in the coming years. It is here that the fight for democracy, energy independence and religious freedom will be lost or won.” (Kaplan, 2011, p. flap cover).

ABSTRACT

Every littoral state has certain maritime and strategic interests and the scale of these interests vary from state to state based on geo-political setting of the region. The maritime interests are related to the security of seaborne trade by ensuring freedom of navigation and protection of sea lines of communication and exploitation of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) whereas the strategic interests include the defence and protection of coastline of the state both during peace and wartime. This paper analyzes the Political dynamics such as security situation in the Middle East, prevailing conflict in Afghanistan, Iran-US tension over nuclear issue, Pakistan-India divergent regional interests, China’s growing regional influence and the US counter balancing strategy which have entirely changed the geo-political scenario within and around South Asia. In this standpoint, the paper signifies the construction of Gwadar Port as a critical element for Pakistan to ensure its maritime interests and security in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea due to their cumulative geo-economic and geo-political impacts on the global political chessboard.

Key Words: Maritime and Strategic Interests, Geo-Political Setting, Regional Dynamics, Energy, Imperatives of Gwadar Port.

Introduction

The contribution of geographical environment in the development of human society has been commendable. Sea, with its three-quarters of the earth surface, is the most important feature of the environment (Malik, 2012, p. 57). The sea has always been a main pool of resources and presents numerous opportunities to promote national interests. In the new millennium, the aspect of maritime security has got momentum worldwide as the cumulative impact of globalization has transformed states into a system of interdependence for greater economic growth and output by trading with complementary products and resources. Maritime security, therefore, revolves around the safety of the sea and Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) for political, economic, strategic, military, scientific and technological interests (Tahir, 2007, 195). Tahir further highlights that the security

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of SLOC is of immense importance for a country whose trade is seaborne. The vulnerability of a nation's seaborne trade could devastate its entire economic system of imports and exports (p. 195). It is, therefore, considered imperative for littoral states to ensure maritime security for impregnable coastal defence and protection of national security.

Almost all maritime states have certain strategic interests and the scale of these interests vary from state to state based on geo-political setting of the region (Nawaz, 2004, p. 64). These interests can be categorized as maritime and strategic. The maritime interests are related to the security of seaborne trade by ensuring freedom of navigation and protection of sea lines of communication and exploitation of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) whereas the strategic interests include the defence and protection of coastline of the state both during peace and at wartime (p. 64).

Global Security and Role of Critical Sea Lanes in the Indian Ocean Region

Strategic uncertainty has made the geo-politics of the Indian Ocean more dynamic and complex among energy importing countries as they are passing through a very critical security and political situation. Regional political dynamics such as security situation in the Middle East, prevailing conflict in Afghanistan, Iran-US tension over nuclear issue, Pakistan-India divergent regional interests, China growing regional influence and the US counter balancing strategy have further complicated geo-political scenario (Bateman, Chan and Graham, 2011, p. 41). In this context, Sea Lanes used for global trade and energy transportation in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea are critical for littoral states due to their cumulative geo-economic and geo-political impact on the world political scenario. Even temporary disruption of these sea lanes in the region can lead to have severe global economic impacts. The critical importance and role of the sea lanes are briefly discussed in the subsequently:

Global Trade Corridor

The Indian Ocean region, with highest tonnage of goods, is recognized the world's most important trade and energy corridor. The global trade corridor accounts for the transportation of a large volume of international long haul maritime cargo and almost 80% percent of the total traffic of petroleum products for the whole world (Cordner, 2011, p. 73). Some of the primary items from the export list are mostly energy products. The Strait of Hormuz, being a main corridor, facilitates and links trading between regions of the world (Ghosh, 2004, p. 3). Moreover, almost half of the world's trade by value is routed through this chokepoint (Ahmad, 2009, p. 87). The east-west shipping lane is the main global trade corridor that accounts for thousands of merchant vessels in the region (Khan & Aijaz, 2012, p. 37). As a consequent, maritime security in the Arabian Sea is the high priority of the world

powers to ensure uninterrupted flow of trade and freedom of navigation (Ahmad, 2009, p. 87).

Global Energy Corridor

Energy supply to industrialized and developing economies is routed through this region. The United States, China, European countries, Japan and many others are the main importers of crude oil from the Gulf region (Das, 2009, p. 64). The Strait of Hormuz linking the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean has more importance in the world as a main energy corridor than any other energy route in the world. Every day, almost 17 million barrels of crude oil supply accounting for 20 percent of the world's per day passes through this main chokepoint (Klare, 2012, p. A1). The disruption of energy supply will be a security threat to the maritime interests of the industrial states as a majority of their energy lifelines are sea-based (Ghosh, 2004, p. 1). Moreover, energy plays a key role in influencing the geo-political strategies of these nations, any such disturbance in its supply would have severe economic, political and security consequences for the entire world. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz can cause disorder of seaborne trade and rise in the global oil prices. According to Ghosh (2004), closure of the Strait practically cuts completely off Gulf supplies to the East and substantially affects the West which could result in soaring global oil prices up to 50 percent thereby bringing recession in the world. Therefore, energy security in South Asia as well as surrounding regions has become a high priority for sustainable economic growth.

Oil Transit Chokepoints

Chokepoints are narrow channels along extensively used global sea corridors. These straits are critical for global energy security as the high volume of world oil supply is routed through these chokepoints (Ho, 2011, p. 36). The Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca are two important strategic chokepoints in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Former links the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean while the latter connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Oceans. Another significant route is the Bab-el-Mandab which links the Arabian Sea with the Red Sea and leads to the Suez Canal (Ho, 2011). The international oil and energy market is largely dependent on a reliable supply and transport because blockage or temporary suspension of energy supply can lead to affect energy prices in the international market. The security of the oil tankers is also vulnerable to theft from pirates and terrorists attacks. The security of shipping and seaborne trade in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf is a key strategic interest of all regional and extra-regional states, especially China, USA and Japan who are the main stakeholders (Bateman, Chan and Graham, 2011, p. 42).

Strategic Importance of Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a key chokepoint to facilitate world's energy flow from the Persian Gulf. Otherwise, enclosed waters of the Persian Gulf could not be linked. It connects the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean via the Gulf of Oman, with the Sultanate of Oman's Musandam Peninsula on its southern shores and Iran to the north coast (Ho, 2011, p. 36). At its narrowest aspect, the channel is 21 miles wide and ships are controlled and facilitated with passage under a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) mechanism which has 10 km wide traffic lane to separate inbound traffic from outbound to reduce any chance of collision. To navigate the Strait, ships pass through the coastlines of Iran and Oman. The majority of crude oil and energy supply of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is exported to United States, China, Western Europe and Asian countries through this chokepoint. The two 3.2 km wide shipping lanes, separated by a buffer zone, are positioned inside Omani coastline. Roughly 32 km across at its narrowest point, The Strait of Hormuz is a main channel which facilitates the supply of crude oil of majority of the Persian Gulf and Middle (Luke, 2010, p.151). Luke further elaborates that 90 percent hydrocarbons exports of the Persian Gulf, over 40 percent of world's oil export (between 16.5 and 17 million barrels per day (bbl/d)) and supply of the liquefied natural gas from Qatar are being transported through this channel (p. 151). To sustain global economy for western economies headed by United States, Japan, Australia and Europe, keeping the Strait of Hormuz open is considered critical. However, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz for a long time may cause severe global economic crisis. Non-availability of Persian Gulf's energy supply would bring energy crisis in the world and per barrel cost of oil would swiftly break through the US \$ 100 mark and rise in price even likely to continue until the oil supply is restored through the strait (p. 152).

Protection of Sea Lines of Communication

The SLOC links the entire world. During peace times, these arteries serve as vital commercial trade routes and during war these arteries act as strategic lines of communication between war zones (Good, 2002, p. 22). The growing demand for energy has driven world powers especially United States, China, India, Japan and European States to ensure the security of the SLOC and chokepoints of the energy supply in the region (Ghosh, 2004, p. 1). The economic development of a country is closely associated and linked with international trade and energy supply (p. 2). The South Asian states in this context are not indifferent as growth and development of their economies are largely dependent on seaborne trade and security of SLOCs. India and Pakistan in the region have a very pivotal position as far as the Sea Lines of Communication is concerned as both the countries are nuclear adversaries with unresolved territorial disputes. War between these two can trigger disruption of SLOCs and even results in the closure of chokepoints which could further disturb the entire world economic order. That's why, conflict

between these two arch enemies always alarms the world and has the potential to acquire an international dimension. This can be one of the reasons that justifies the permanent presence of the United States and keen interest of China in the Arabian Sea to ensure uninterrupted energy supply to their industries.

The Geopolitics of Energy in the Indian Ocean

The Asian states rapid demand for energy has led the politics of energy in the Indian Ocean a key focus of contemporary strategic interest (Basrur, 2011). The gap between supply and demand has evolved strategic competition among states in which China leads the surge (p. 32). In such emerging international system, states can go the extreme level to ensure energy supply for their countries to expand their economies. The energy factor has exponentially multiplied the importance of the Indian Ocean. About one out of every three barrels of crude oil reserves in the world is occupying by either Saudi Arabia with 259 billion barrels of reserves or by Iraq having 112 billion barrels of reserves (Robert, 2003, p. A1). The world need for energy has grown by 95 percent over the last thirty years and it is estimated to grow by another 33 percent during the next fifteen years and by 45 percent during the next 20 years (Ahmad, 2009, p.88). According to available resources, the Persian Gulf region contains about 60 percent of the world's proven crude oil and almost 45 percent gas reserves (p. 88).

Pakistan's Geo-Strategic Interests

The strategic interests are associated and determined with the country's scale of maritime dependence. Every year, about 36,000 ships transit through Pakistan's area of interest (Malik, 2012, p. 57). 95 percent of country's annual trade from its total 38 million tons is routed through sea (p. 57). Pakistan's coastal region, on the other hand, offers immense economic and strategic opportunities to support its economy in many ways. All maritime nations have a certain continental or maritime preference in its strategic direction based on its physical and political geography (Nawaz, 2004, p. 64). According to available estimated projection, Pakistan's annual trade would increase up to 91 million tons by 2015. This rise in commercial activities would give substantial boost to the economy.

These interests vary from state to state depending on a variety of geo-strategic and geo-economic factors. Pakistan's geo-strategic interests are determined from the following geo-strategic and geo-political vulnerabilities:

Animosity with India

In modern political era, security of nation state is a complex phenomenon and no single established concept of security definition exists which may be acceptable to all states in the world. Every state, therefore, has its own specific security definition and priority as per its strategic interests (Bukhari, 2011, p.11). States

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have different outlook on their security priorities which may be trivial for other. For example, for Beijing economic security, political independence and avoiding hegemony in the region could be the priorities but to the United States, fight against terrorism and favourable international environment would be the preference in its foreign policy (Bukhari, 2011, p. 11).

Similarly, for Islamabad, India is the security priority of its foreign policy. Pakistan's security dilemma arises with the growth and development of Indian national and military power which could not be ignored. India is perceived by Pakistan as a potential threat to its existence. Since the partition of sub-continent, New Delhi never missed any chance to destabilize Pakistan and the country has experienced very odd periods with its eastern neighbor and two rivals have also waged three large wars and many small skirmishes. Despite overt nuclearization of South Asia in 1998, deterrence could not preclude the possibility of armed conflict as the region experienced a limited war in Kargil in 1999 and military standoff in 2001 (Tellis, 1997, p. 2). On the other hand, India's focus on naval expansion and move to accrue maximum maritime interests are based on the country's dependence on sea to sustain growing economy (Nawaz, 2004, p. 67). Moreover, India's maritime strategy has been directed to achieve a sea-based second-strike capability which will destabilize the strategic balance existing between Indian and Pakistan as former will gain an edge over the later with strategic capability to annihilate in case of nuclear war (p. 67).

Pakistan's Dilemma about Strategic Depth

The military concept of strategic depth implies to the distance between potential frontlines and key centers of logistics, military productions, industrial regions and areas of population. It is also referred as heartland of the country. Military strategic depth needs vast territory or space in the interior to retreat to extend the SLOC of the enemy and then regroup to mount a counter-strike (Malik, 2012, p. 58). Many small countries having geographic narrowness always prefer to maintain balance of power in the region. For example, occupation of West Bank and Golan Heights by Israel are based on its notion of strategic depth vis-à-vis Iran and Iraq. It is clearly understood that from defence perspective, every state needs strategic depth against its potential enemy.

Ahmad (1992) is of the opinion that every state has a certain power base, small or big, to play a productive and influential role in the world politics (p. xiii). The elements of geo-politics have deep impact in its foreign policy as these are best applied to assess the strategic significance of a country (P. xiii). In Pakistan case, the country has very little strategic depth from east to west. Since inception, Pakistan's geographic narrowness and adjacent of its heartlands to India's boundary have always preoccupied its defence planners. Pakistan needs territorial strategic depth to enhance its ability to absorb the initial strike of the enemy and inflict attrition on it through multi-layered defence approach (Maria Sultan, personal communication, October 25, 2012). Comparatively, India is

geographically four times larger and seven times more populated country than Pakistan (Robinson, 2011, p. 63). Pakistan's occupancy with only 300 miles in width makes it vulnerable to a central attack which could result in splitting the country into two (p. 63). Pakistan's metropolitan like Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Lahore, etc are located within the reach of the assault. Such strategic vulnerability of Pakistan is considered as an existential threat to the country's existence.

Geographical Vulnerability of Karachi Port

Pakistan's geographical vulnerability exposed in the war of 1971 when the Indian Navy captured its entire merchant fleet and a portion of naval fleet (Jan, 2013, p. A1). Since then, Pakistan's coastline has been so vulnerable that the Indian navy can bottle up its naval ships at Qasim Naval Base adjoining to Karachi which is the country's sole operational naval base. The Indian's ability to blockade oil supply and commerce of Pakistan at its international shipping port at Karachi has long been a security concern for the defence analysts in Pakistan (Jones, 2005, p. 38). In fact, blockade of Karachi port by the Indian Navy in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 resulted in the closure of its commerce and energy supply. India continued exploiting this geographical vulnerability of Pakistan in a number of occasions. Merely a decade ago, Pakistan perceived similar threats during the Kargil war of 1999 and also during eye-ball-to-eye-ball border confrontation 2001-02. On the other hand, Pakistan with small navy and existing geographical vulnerable naval positioning at Karachi cannot mount a significant counter-threat to India. In addition, there is India's main international shipping ports like Mumbai which is located too far on its western coast. Similarly, Pakistan needs to follow Indians approach of locating its main shipping and naval facility away from the enemy's reach.

Indian Naval Expansion

The Indian naval expansion with a spending of about US \$45 billion for the next 20 years on the development of new warships, destroyers and nuclear submarines is an effort on its part to emerge as a main sea power in the Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean (Tariq, 2014, p.16). Interestingly, the Indian naval budget is even surpassed China's spending on its naval expansion a matter of great concern for Pakistan (Jones, 2011, p. 11). Since the end of the cold war, India initially planned to modernize its navy on 25 years plan. The plan was to develop a strong and effective military presence in the Indian Ocean to prevent extra-regional powers (Good, 2002, pp. 20-21). In the recent period, the Indian navy has been expanded with the inclusion of Ballistic Missile Submarines, Nuclear (SSBNs) development of sea-based strategic missiles, quality of weapon sensors, force multipliers and networking of platforms (Mehta, 2007, p. v).

India's Pursuit of a Blue Water Navy

As a maritime strategic paradigm, "Blue Water" navy is a transition of a "Brown Water" navy. Brown water navy refers to a naval force which has the ability to control or operate within one hundred nautical miles of the coastal areas while blue water navy is taken in a wider sense of maritime strategy. This means safeguarding maritime interests, the development of marine economy and research on maritime science and environment (Good, 2002, p. 38). The Indian navy is struggling to transform from a littoral force to a blue water largest naval force in the region. Since the post-cold war, India has been improving its maritime status and has further stepped up to control the entire Indian Ocean region (Good, 2002, p. 20). In 2006, India revealed its maritime strategy to transform country's navy from brown coastal defence to blue water navy (From Brown water to Blue, 2006, p. A1). The strategy aims at expanding Indian Navy as a formidable blue water fleet to operate over 200 miles or 320 kilometers from coastline (Scott, 2008, p. 1). In brief, the blue water status would uplift Indian Navy as a sea-power to target enemy with long range, deep water and oceanic maritime capability (p. 1). Long range military operative capability and deployment would be a substantial threat to Pakistan's maritime interests in the region as India's naval expansion in the Indian Ocean basin would be able to eliminate its strategic depth in the Arabian Sea.

India's Expanding Maritime Ambitions

Indian policy makers and defence analysts claim India's strategic environment in the entire Indian Ocean basin, stretching from the eastern coast of Africa as the westernmost frontiers to the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf (Fair, 2007, p. 264). In addition, India's claim of strategic space encompasses to the east, the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea; to the north, Central Asia and to the south it extends to Antarctica. Within this extended strategic outlook, India's top priority is to attain preeminent power within the Indian Ocean basin with the support of the United States and Australia (p. 264). India has already projected itself as sea-power of South Asia and seeks to emerge as a global power in due course (Perkovich, 2004, pp. 130-33). New Delhi believes that with its might and capability, it would be able to shape regional security arrangements to foster stability in the entire Indian Ocean basin and even beyond (Fair, 2007, p. 265). According to Indian Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2005-06, India has made some significant progress in achieving a truly multi polar world order in which India has emerged as one of poles (Govt. of India, 2006, p. 2). India's rise as a great power will have far reaching impacts on Pakistan.

India's 'Look East' Policy

Consonant with India's strategic interests within the whole Indian Ocean basin, India is actively pursuing a 'Look East' policy which encompasses greater

economic, military and strategic cooperation with the Middle Eastern and West Asian countries including Israel, Iran, Arab states, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (Fair, 2007, p. 265). To strengthen its strategic influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan, India has established two airbases in Tajikistan (Robinson, 2011, p. 59). Iran is a pivotal state for India to facilitate it with direct access to the oil and energy rich Central Asian states (Aaron, 2003, p. 30). Such close ties with Arab states may circumvent Pakistan's intimate ties with these states (Fair, 2007, p. 267).

Indo-US Strategic Nexus

The security environment has always depended on the nature of mutual relations between Pakistan and India. Military or strategic leverage of one over the other can lead to destabilize the entire region. The on-going Indo-US military and strategic nexus has severe implications for Pakistan to maintain balance of power which is favoring India. The strategic partnership between India and the United States aims at expanding mutual cooperation on dual-use of high technology goods, civilian space and civil nuclear as well as missile defence (Kronstadt, 2006, pp. 6-7). Moreover, the US President Barak Hussain Obama in his visit to India also concluded a number of military and strategic agreements with his counter-part in New Delhi including the provisions of C-17 and F35 aircrafts along with latest defence equipments (Shaukat, 2010, p. A1). Such security and strategic cooperation between these two countries would be a security concern for Pakistan as the country's deterrence capabilities against India would be deteriorated and balance of power would tilt towards India (Bukhari, 2011, p. 2).

Indo-Israel Strategic Nexus

Growing India-Israel strategic and security nexus is a main concern for policy making circle in Pakistan. India is regarded single largest importer of defence equipments of Israel which overall accounts for 50 percent of Tel Aviv's defence exports and 30 percent of New Delhi's imports surpassing almost ten billion dollars bilateral defence trade for a period of ten years (Khattak, 2013, p. A1). The growing strategic cooperation between India and Israel has expanded to cover almost all fields of defence and security including research, space technology, anti-ballistic missile programme, intelligence sharing, training of forces, joint naval exercises and exchange of weapon technology. Israel is advanced in electronic warfare capabilities and its continuous support to India would have severe implications on Pakistan's warfare abilities. Israel's exported Phalcon-equipped AWACS is considered a great strategic asset for India against Pakistan. The AWACS facilitates Indian naval force with real time intelligence, surveillance and air superiority against Pakistan during wartime. During almost all wars between India and Pakistan, Israel extended its support to India against Pakistan and during Kargil war of 1999; it provided latest Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to India

to counter Pakistan (Khattak, 2013). In this context, emergence of Sino-Pakistan strategic and naval cooperation becomes inevitable to counter Indo-Israel military nexus.

Geo-Strategic Imperatives of Gwadar port for Pakistan

Situated on the Makran coast, Gwadar deep sea water port is a strategic maritime outpost. Being the third largest port of the world, Gwadar port is located at the doorway of the Persian Gulf just 180 nautical miles away from the Strait of Hormuz (Mazhar, Javaid & Goraya, 2012, p. 117). It is located about 400 km at a distance to the Strait of Hormuz which is a strategic supply line of the world through which almost 16-17 million barrels of oil is routed (Sakhuja, 2013, p. 9). 20-30 tankers pass through this chokepoint every day and during peak hours, one tanker is followed by another after every six minutes (p. 9). From the strategic and military perspectives, Gwadar port is a strategic listening post to keep an eye on the eastern enemy naval activities in the region. Moreover, Gwadar port's close proximity with the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz will enable Pakistan to monitor the Sea Lines of Communications.

After exposure of geographical vulnerability in 1965 and then 1971 war realized the country's defence planners to develop an additional port with naval base facility on the Makran Coast with a far distance from Karachi due to defence point of view (Haider, 2013, p. A1). But due to prolong negligence to this factor, the Kargil War-1998 also exposed the vulnerability of the Karachi port, being the main shipping port of the country. In 2002, Gen Pervez Musharaf, the then President and Chief Executive of the country who practically experienced the susceptibility of Karachi port during the Kargil war launched Gwadar port project along with other associated projects (Haider, 2013, p. A1).

Pakistan's geo-strategic position and geo-political fixation are quite significant and have acquired immense importance in the realm of national security. Gwadar port's proximity to the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, Eurasia and the world main energy and trade chokepoints all contribute to highlight its unique importance in the region. Its geo-strategic location in the Arabian Sea could facilitate electronic surveillance to monitor naval activities in the entire Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. In fact, Gwadar port lies diametrically within the domain of Mackinder's Rimland concept which was used during the Great Game. During the time, Gwadar remained military powers' main focus in the Indian Ocean. In history, warm waters of Gwadar attracted Greeks, Arabs, Portuguese, Persians, Russians and the British (Global Security, 2013).

The construction of Gwadar port along with its related projects would benefit Pakistan on the below areas vis-à-vis India and also to secure its maritime economic interests in the region.

Gwadar port Provides Strategic Depth

Selection of Gwadar location for the world third largest port was actually based on the geographical reasons as it is far too susceptible to maritime attacks from the Indian Navy. The move is similar to the shift made by government of Pakistan to relocate its capital from Karachi to custom-built Islamabad on the similar reason of geographical vulnerability as the old city was within the reach of the Indian army as well as navy (The best alternative, 2014, p. A1). Geo-strategic location of Gwadar port will help increase the strategic depth for Pakistan. Being situated 460 km away from India will considerably reduce the country's vulnerability (Malik, 2012, p. 58). The port would enable Pakistan to adopt nuclear 'assure retaliation' postures which is mostly referred as 'credible minimum deterrence' which depend on a small but secure nuclear force that guarantees a retaliatory strike capability against adversary (Robinson, 2011, p. 66). This strategic depth would facilitate Pakistan's navy to locate near to the port vicinity for effective deployment of assault against the enemy during war (Haider, 2013, p. A1).

Zia Haider, US based defence analyst writes that past naval blockade of Karachi port by India had severe economic consequences for Pakistan (Ramachandran, 2005, p. A1). However, the geo-strategic location of Gwadar port, being 725 km away to the west of Karachi port, makes it further away from India and this provides it with crucial strategic depth vis-à-vis India along its coastline (p. A1). The port distance from enemy lines makes it a safe and strategically significant place to absorb the Indian air strikes. Recently, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), an institute of Pakistan's armed forces, has revealed that Naval Strategic Force Command will perform a key role to serve as the custodian of the nation's second-strike capability from a safer location (Pakistan cites Second-Strike, 2012, p. A1). This would help Pakistan fire back at the enemy with modified Hatf 7 nuclear-capable cruise missiles following elimination of its land-based nuclear arsenals, said by Mansoor Ahmed, A nuclear weapons analyst. It is pertinent to mention that second strike capability could only be achieved if Strategic Naval Force is stationed away from Karachi port. The vulnerability of Karachi port during 1971 and then during Kargil war made Pakistan realized that an alternative naval base away from Indian borders is indispensable for the very existence of the country.

Military Imperatives of Gwadar port

Every maritime nation needs a military force at sea for protection of its strategic and maritime interests. Addition to the security of seaborne trade and resources, military power across the globe serves maritime and strategic interests of the country to ensure its security against any imminent threat stemming from the sea (Nawaz, 2004, p.63). The interrelation between economic and military elements of maritime power makes them interdependent. Immense economic benefits from the sea motivate maritime nations to develop military power at sea to accrue financial

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benefits as well as develop impregnable maritime defence (p. 63). The development of maritime power at sea for the protection of strategic and economic interests has become more important and indispensable than it was in the past. This development is due to the enormous growth of seaborne trade and its significant contributing role in the economic development. The military power at sea also facilitates to promote the country's maritime interests (p. 64).

Gwadar port intends to transform Pakistan's Navy into a power that can stand at par with regional navies with strong footing. The port would facilitate Chinese with a strategic foothold in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean (Military Gwadar, 2013). In 2007, the government of Pakistan approved a plan to develop a new shipyard at Gwadar on a fast track basis (Kiani, 2007, p. A1). The shipyard initially decided to establish at Gwadar East Bay on an area of approximately 500 acres (p. A1). The shipyard would help ship building of up to Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) and Ultra Large Crude Carrier (ULCC) size.

Countering the Indo-US-Israel Nexus

Both China and Pakistan perceive growing Indo-US-Israel security and strategic cooperation detrimental for peace and stability in the region and can undermine the entire strategic balance in Asia which has far reaching impacts on the world politics (Bukhari, 2011, p.2). Such Security, military and strategic cooperation can only be counterbalanced with the development of similar strategic and naval cooperation between Pakistan-China. Beijing too wants to form strong military, strategic and naval ties with Pakistan to deter growing US-India collaboration which Chinese consider a move against to keep China at bay (Bukhari, 2011, p. 2).

Conclusion

Today, maritime interests, coastal defence, security of SLOCs and supply chain dynamics including sea ports, ships and chokepoints have become paramount priority of every littoral state's foreign policy. Unlike other regions of the world, the Indian Ocean has significant economic imperatives parallel with diverse challenges and threat perception. Emergence of resource rich Central Asian States, regional dynamics after 9/11 incident, deteriorating security situation in the Persian Gulf, Chinese emerging economy, proximity of the port with the Strait of Hormuz and natural deep sea feature of the port all make Gwadar port a pivotal place in the world. The location and deep sea natural elements of Gwadar port have also been recognized by the ADB to act as an alternate port to the Persian Gulf ports for handling large oil tankers and mother ships in due course.

Gwadar port take over by the Chinese government company would inject new enthusiasm into operational site of the port to achieve national defence objectives both by China and Pakistan. The management of the port by Chinese would enable China's greater presence and influence in the Indian Ocean to monitor the activities near the chokepoint of Hormuz. The potential of Gwadar port on the

strategic, economic and military perspective would bring Sino-Pakistan in the active maritime cooperation which includes all activities related to shipping, freedom of navigation, the enforcement of international law of sea and coastal defence. It also encompasses resource-based interests such as exploitation of offshore resources within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As the port is considered the third largest in the world, it can easily accommodate Chinese submarines and defender ships to ensure security of the Arabian Sea and safety of its vital energy supply lines which would also help Pakistan strengthen its naval forces against India's outmatched naval expansion. In short, Gwadar port is considered by the government as Pakistan's alternate strategic, economic and military base to the already saturated twin ports in Karachi.

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