

**RESEARCH PAPER****A Normal Study on Future Offers India in The Indo-Pacific Region****Chandresh Pandey**

Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Iswar Saran Degree College, Prayagraj

Email: chandreshsultan@gmail.comReceived: 1st October 2017, Revised: 16th November 2017, Accepted: 24th November 2017**ABSTRACT**

The rim of the Indian and Pacific Oceans houses Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong and the ASEAN countries which today boast of powerful and growing economies, which are predicted to become the economic power houses of the 21st century. Dragons and Tigers are some names given to these resurgent economies. This is also an area where the interests of the world's most militarily dominant countries are likely to clash vis-à-vis USA, Russia, Japan, China (especially if it patches up with Taiwan, after absorbing Hong Kong), the Koreas and to some extent India and a combined ASEAN. This last grouping which began as an economic and social gathering of five Southeast Asian states (10 members at present) and they delayed their inauguration at Bangkok in 1967 awaiting a diplomatic message from India which never came, are now cooperating on security issues also, hence the assumption. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Elder Statesman and ex-Prime Minister of Singapore, predicted that the next century could well be an Eastern century and added at his lecture to the National Defense College in Bangkok in 1991 that India would be engaged in internal economic and social restructuring for about 8 years and after that only, it will emerge as a power to reckon with. His predictions are generally well received and, in this case, seem plausible and so far on track. India is involved in changes, as one sees today and till the economy gains in growth rate its Military, Nautical and such ambitions will have to wait. What is visible is that many nations in the Asia-Pacific are able to sustain burgeoning military and naval budgets, despite the fact that Navies and Air Forces the world over are proving to be the most expensive of the Armed Forces to maintain and acquire.

INTRODUCTION

The potential for conflict and disputes over sea resources and contested islands in the China seas are also many, goading these nations to increase defense budgets since their growth rates are high. Their leadership fairly early realized that the Cold War was turning into a gold war between nations, and the pre-eminence of the West was declining because of saturation of wealth and indolent attitudes, leading to recession. USA was also becoming inward looking, and much of its energies had been sapped by the vast nuclear arsenals it had built up to fight the Cold War. The Western hold on technology was also reducing through flight, adduced by the Information Revolution.

The benign US Military presence by way of troops and hardware stationed in the East since the Second World War which offered Japan and other nations, in the area security from the big Soviet Bear and grappled with Communism in Vietnam, is today definitely receding USA can no longer afford that luxury or continue to be the world's policeman, even if it is the solo Super Power. The USA is still rich but economically down and realizes its predicament but does not yet know how to retain its predominant position. The West has also transferred a fair dose of technology to the nations in the East, and slowly Japan and Korea and others starts sending back some experiences and technologies. Samuel Huntington an adviser to the US Government and a Professor at Harvard has scribed a piece predicting the rise of non-Western nations in the summer issue of Foreign Policy but he attributes the rise to ethnic bonds of races and civilizations and titles it the "Clash of Civilizations", and the premise begs questioning since ethnic bonds always existed. Clashes are likely to be economy driven, and so is the rise of these nations.

THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

In the Asia-Pacific region there are a number of maritime claims and disputes, racial contradictions and interests that can lead to clashes in no time and these need recounting. The present appears calm because most nations realise that it is in their interest to keep these hot spots on their back burners in order to cohesively stabilize and improve their economies vis-à-vis the West. The disputes over the Nansha Islands called Spratlys with claims separately put forth by China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines over the large Kalayaan group have already witnessed skirmishes in January 1988 between PLA Navy and the Viet Nameese Navy, and the tension continues. Malaysia has a claim on the Commodore Islands called the Terumbu Lakshama locally, and on September 1991 they officially declared their intent to construct a 1.5 km long air strip and to develop a tourist resort on the island. The Swallow Reef is reported to be manned by Malaysian naval commandos. Taiwan has a traditional claim on the Paracels group of Islands. The other major maritime disputes are between Japan and Taiwan over the Senkaku islands, between Malaysia and Singapore over the Pedra Branca or Hosburg lighthouse, and the claim of the Indonesians over the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan now in Malaysian hands. Japan and Russia have a dispute over the Kuriles. This makes the South China Sea and the Pacific Rim potentially volatile and it is the diplomacy of the combined ASEAN that has ensured tempers are kept cool, but between the lines each nation is working away to see their interests are safeguarded and the modernization of their Armed Forces is afoot. The legal intricacies of solving the claims are mind boggling. There is a contradiction whether the 1982 Law of the Seas which permits nations to claim 370 km of EEZ is to count, or the Seabed Claim of slope and continental shelf or are historical factors to be the arbiters in such cases as there are overlaps in the EEZ, and tectonic folds in the China Seas which defy solution.

The Armed Forces of Japan, ASEAN, Korea and Taiwan have also been very alert to expose their uniformed personnel to the West and have regularly exercised with USA, UK, Australia and France and become net gainers in experience to plan their own Forces and material. They have also been in the forefront to accept the demands for International Military Intervention under the aegis of the United Nations as seen in Africa, Cambodia, Vietnam, Somalia and Yugoslavia. Their officers have attended UN Staff Colleges and are well versed in International Affairs. This is another new and daunting commitment in military employability and in costs, but it gives the Armed Forces tremendous exposure, which is most essential in today's information revolution. In the Gulf War, Singapore, Japan, and Philippines sent contingents under the garb of medical and mine sweeper support, and gained much intelligence and knowledge of modern warfare.

Today most nations in Europe, and USA are combating recession and are experiencing unemployment alongside defence cuts. The writing on the revised Military Map of the world is that all frills are to disappear from the Armed Forces if the national economy is not doing well.

DEFENCE BUDGET

Defence budgets have become directly dependent on economic growth. A sea change is in the air in the West while the East shows a resilient picture. The exception to this phenomenon then is the nations in the Asia Pacific, whose strong economies are able to sustain incremental defence budgets. Singapore with its 5.69 million people has a per capita income of 62,112 \$ and a total trade volume of 390 billion \$ US which is more than that of India. It has a defence budget of 12.6 billion\$ making it the most heavily defended nation in the world after Taiwan and Israel. It has a potent Air Force that can refuel in the air and flies the F16s, F5s, A4s and the E2Cs over the seas. Singapore Navy after successfully commissioning 6 Corvettes in a record time of 2 years (1990-91) has embarked on a program to acquire 4 Karlskronavet Minesweepers from Sweden and the first ship RSN BEDOK was spared from Sweden's own operational Fleet in July, and commissioned by Mrs Yeo, wife of Dr Yeo Ning Hong, the Defence Minister. The three follows on hulls named Katong, Punggol and Kallang will be fitted out at Singapore shipbuilding and engineering yard at Tuas locally. For added maritime surveillance they are acquiring 3 Fokker F 50s from Holland and fitting them out at Singapore Aerospace with missiles to augment the 3 E2C Hawkeyes they already fly. The ex-Chief of the RSN Commodore Teo Chee Hean who introduced many forward-looking policies has joined politics and become the Minister of State for Finance, and his predecessor is

head of the Port of Singapore Authority. This shows that there are talents in their Armed Forces, and they have long term policies. Malaysia a multi racial nation with a population of only 32.4 million and a per capita income rising over 12,295\$ has embarked on a plan to induct two British built Vosper frigates, Hawks Mk 100/200, Martello radars and Prime Minister of Malaysia, has also decided to have a rapid deployment type of force. The threat in the Spratlys is very much in their minds. Surprisingly Australia an ally of the USA has decided that its future as an Asia-Pacific nation lies in the well being of Southeast Asia and has offered to cooperate in an ambitious Frigate deal with Malaysia. There is talk of the Malaysian Air Force acquiring attack helicopters and MIG 29s for the defence of the Spratlys. Its neighbour to the north, Thailand is also expanding its Navy with a Helicopter carrier from Spain and Mine sweepers. It has also ordered Maritime Patrol aircraft with Harpoon firing capability. Indonesia with a per capita income of 700 \$, has also gained much confidence as a military power thanks to their growing economy and the concept of DWI FUNGSI (Dual Function) and Wasan Nusantara. In these policies the ABRI (Armed Forces) are enjoined to contribute to defence and development of the archipelago nation. The Indonesian Navy in 1992 has ambitiously signed to acquire 39 ex-East German navy ships and a deal for 69 Hawk 100/200 aircraft was sealed at the Paris Air Show in June between Air Marshal Rilo Pambudi and John Weston, head of BAs. It is also building Lurssen class patrol craft at PtPal yard at Surabaya and is turning out 40 Casa CN 212 transport aircraft and 6 CN 235 maritime patrol aircraft from IPTN factory including 2 for Brunei. ASEAN nations except their sickman Philip pines can afford the increased expenditure as their growth rates are strong and recession is being kept at bay. Taiwan is a strong military state with missile power and is cash rich. It has an ambitious programme for acquiring unarmed Naval hulls from France, and has just signed for 21 Harpoon missiles for local fitting. It is shopping around for submarines and is a Maritime Power of stature. Its foe, mainland China with which it may one day merge because of ethnicity, as did the Berlin Wall, has reduced the manpower in the Armed Forces but since the economy has sustained a growth rate crossing double digits, the defence budget is up to around 10 billion S, and the PLA Navy boasts of Nuclear Missile firing XIA submarines and a long grey line of ships which are being modernised. China is making noises to acquire the vast assets of Hong Kong even earlier than 1997 and since it is a super power in nuclear terms it will certainly dominate the region. This is what worries Samuel Huntington, when he talks of the rise of the yellow race. The two Koreas are enemies but cousins; inhabit separate countries but one day ethnicity and economic pragmatism could draw them closer and form a formidable alliance with possible nuclear potential of the North laced with the technological and industrial prowess of the South. Japan has no dearth of liquidity but it only spends around 1% of its GNP on nuclear defence. For how long will this restraint last as USA withdraws, and tensions in the area mount are a moot question. It has one of the highest defence budget.

CONCLUSION

The Armed Forces are euphemistically called Self-Defence Forces but are full of offensive punch and have exercised in USA and the Gulf, Japan's Military Industrial Complex which can build the latest AEGIS class frigates, submarines, attack helicopters and F 16 type of fighters is capable and is growing. Much military power is gravitating towards the East. This is beginning to worry the USA and the Western world. Samuel Huntington, the policy adviser to the Government of USA, has reason to warn his Government and prepare the world should the West decide to stunt the growth of the East with barriers or compete fiercely. The law of human nature to disagree is unlikely to disappear, only there will be new players. Apart from these players, the most significant and threatening player in the region is China. With the unprecedented rise of Dragon in last four decades and ambitious leadership of Xi Jinping has created a security dilemma for all the major world powers, especially, India. India being immediate neighbor to China and only potential counterpart for its economic supremacy is greatly affected by the Chinese growth both strategically as well as economically. The trade deficits between India and China have been increasing ever since although the gross trade between the two countries rises. In the Indo-Pacific region all the powers are trying to enhance their respective authority and many military alliances and counter alliances has been formed in this course. However, India has successfully maintained the required balance in her approach till now, but it will become more and more difficult in upcoming days with

the world being once again gravitated towards a new cold war situation. New Delhi is required to maintain her allegiance to either side for her own economic and strategic benefits & have to effectively address the security dilemma created by Beijing with its activities in the South Asian region such as the string of pearls, CPEC, etc. India will have to make sure that her neighbor must understand the 'debt trap policy' by China through which it lures the smaller countries in the region for her own benefit. The recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka must be put forward as the eye opener to these small countries as these Chinese investments and economic support effectively threatens their sovereignty.

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