

# ***Sir Creek: A New Beginning of An Unfinished Agenda***

**Zulqarnain\***  
**Zafar Nawaz Jaspal\*\***

## **ABSTRACT**

*Security is an ineluctable notion when it comes to interaction of nation-states either for cooperation, competition or conflict viz a viz international relations and security studies. Nations have been sensitive in protecting their core national values; both objective and subjective by constituting different national security policies. To do so, they revisit their security policies with the changing world order to pursue their interests amidst war and peace times. The littorals of Arabian Sea in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) are highly significant for geo-political, geo-economic and maritime security interest, not only for Pakistan-India but their global allies in the Asia-Pacific region as well. Sir Creek, the enduring dispute which is primarily maritime dispute and has been traditional security threat is transformed into a non-traditional security threat in the wake of sea level-rise and has severe ramifications to primary, and vital interest of Pakistan in specific and to her regional and global allies in general. The immediate attention without unnecessary delay to the dispute is the need of time; so India should respond to the dispute resolution of Sir Creek for the lasting peace in South Asia.*

---

\* Doctoral Candidate, School of Political Science & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: [zulqamain.nizamani@uog.edu.pk](mailto:zulqamain.nizamani@uog.edu.pk)

\*\* Professor, School of Political Science and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: [znjaspal@qau.edu.pk](mailto:znjaspal@qau.edu.pk)

## Introduction

Sir Creek locally known as *Seer Khari* is the narrow channel<sup>1</sup> of 60 miles water strip<sup>2</sup> with its sub creeks and island belt in the Rann of Kutch region, along Kori Creek that runs parallel and divides India-Pakistan Maritime boundary with divergent claims over its covered area<sup>3</sup> in the littorals of Arabian Sea. It is one of the streams of Indus River that used to fertile the region of *Jati\** and Indus Delta — *the paradise of the aquatic avifauna*<sup>4</sup> — in the littorals of Arabian Sea. India-Pakistan enduring rivalry<sup>5</sup> and changing patterns of cooperation and competition in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in the wake of recently conducted seventh edition of the multinational maritime exercise-Aman 2021 — has multiplied the focus and interest of major powers objectively and subjectively constituting both opportunities and challenges in the IOR.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Creek has geo-political, maritime security as well as *blue-economic*<sup>7</sup> significance. It is considered among Asia's largest fishing grounds, important for the survival of the

---

Jati\* is a tehsil of district Sujawal Sindh, rich in producing rice crop and its several significant creek in southern part of Pakistan since British times.

- 1 Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, 1947-2012: A Concise History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 2 Dr. Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Sir Creek: The Origin and the Development of the Dispute between Pakistan and India," *IPRI Journal*, VII, no. 2 (2007):1-13(01), Accessed March 04, 2022, <https://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/arts2007.pdf>
- 3 Muhammad Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India: Seeking Cooperation and Regional Stability" (M.A. Thesis., Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey: California, December 2010), 2, <file:///E:/Thesis/National%20Security/Security/National%20Security/1980732046.pdf>
- 4 Richard F. Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Indus*, 1st ed., (London: W. H. Allen, 1851, 1851).
- 5 T. V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30.
- 6 Shazia Hasan, "Maritime Exercise Aman-2021 Opens," *Dawn*, February 13, 2021, Accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1607076>
- 7 Voyer, M., et al, "Maritime Security and the Blue Economy" intersections and interdependencies in the Indian Ocean" *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 2018, 02, Accessed March 05, 2021 <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4373&context=lhapapers>

fishermen, its marshland believed to be rich in shale gas and hydrocarbons<sup>8</sup>, which can be of immense economic benefits and the right of excavation under United Nations Convention on Law of Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>9</sup> The Sea Level Rise (SLR) in Sir Creek is posing *multilayered security* threats which is the new beginning of an unfinished agenda for the *traditional security* threats to Pakistan.

Every passing day, mighty tides of Arabian Sea are widening the *Mouth Seer* and other adjoining creeks by altering the course of water and challenging primary interest of South Asian states along with maritime security interest. Pakistan and India cannot afford any catastrophe in the littorals of Arabian Sea coupled with costly damage to their economies. India will comparatively suffer more than Pakistan because of latter's Gujarat which is the heart and engine<sup>10</sup> of its emerging economy<sup>11</sup> lying adjacent to the bank of disputed area. So India should respond positively, professionally and responsibly to all previous efforts taken by both sides like Indo-Pakistan Boundary Tribunal 1949-1950 or what is also considered as Bagge Tribunal,<sup>12</sup> as well as contemporary *Call of Peace* to ensure lasting peace in South Asia.

Among all significant maritime zones, and choke points in the IOR which are the center of focus in 21<sup>st</sup> Century South

- 
- 8 K. R. Menon, "Maritime Confidence Building in South Asia" Stimson Center, (Report 1996), 75. Accessed March 06, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep10946.9.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1d09e5aedc4a1ec238b95465b6d17da1>
- 9 C. M. Meena, "The Geopolitics of Sir Creek: An Evolution", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Review* 3, no. 4 (Oct 2016): 97-105 (102).
- 10 Pandit Verindara, "Gujarat emerging as growth engine of Indian economy", *The Hindu Business Line*, March 23, 2011. Accessed March 28, 2021 <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/Gujarat-emerging-as-growth-engine-of-Indian-economy/article20112372.ece>
- 11 Report: "The Emerging Indian Economy" Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Wadhvani Chair in US-India Policy Studies, 2013, 1-37. Accessed March 28, 2021: [https://csis-website-rod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacyfiles/files/publication/130206\\_KhambattaIndiaEmergEconWeb.pdf](https://csis-website-rod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacyfiles/files/publication/130206_KhambattaIndiaEmergEconWeb.pdf)
- 12 Nafis Ahmed, "The Indo-Pakistan Boundary Disputes Tribunal, 1949-1950," *Geographical Review* 43, no. 3 (1953): 329–37(330). <https://doi.org/10.2307/211751>

Asia,<sup>13</sup> the issue of Sir Creek embodies innumerable opportunities and challenges. Pakistan has the prime strategic significance in the Arabian Sea due to its geographical location. Since both Pakistan and India are nuclear powers with persistent unrest on border, so it remains under the focus of attention of great powers due to its extreme volatile nature.<sup>14</sup> Sir Creek is one of those long-term pending volatile, resolvable<sup>15</sup> disputes between Pakistan and India which has regional and international economic and maritime security ramifications.

The first part of the research paper conceptually analyses the transformations in security studies discourse on national security while the second part critically evaluates the unfinished agenda of *the traditional security threats* and national security of Pakistan. The third part of the paper discusses the *multi-layered security threats* to national security of Pakistan. The fourth part discusses the ramifications at national, regional and international level. The paper establishes a claim that these new developments are serious in nature and the product of history, so demands equal attention as of an unfinished agenda. To test this claim, the research process employs deductive research methodology through positivist approach in social science and qualitative empirical investigation of the available data which is primarily secondary in nature and be tested against theoretical postulates of Copenhagen School of Security Studies in general and Barry Buzan in specific.<sup>16</sup>

---

13 Michel David and Sticklor Russell, "Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime and Security Policy Challenges", In *Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime and Security Policy*, ed., Michel David, Sticklor Russell (Washington: Stimson Center, July 2012), 09-10, [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/IOR\\_chapter1\\_1.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/IOR_chapter1_1.pdf)

14 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India", 5.

15 S. Qalb-i-Abid, "Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri: Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove: An Insider's Account of Pakistan's Foreign Relations Including Details of the Kashmir Framework," *Pakistan Vision*, 16, no.1, (2015): 367, Accessed April 02, 2021, [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Book%20Review\\_v16\\_1.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Book%20Review_v16_1.pdf)

16 Barry Buzan "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," *Blackwell Royal Institute of International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (Jul, 1991): 431-451(438).

## Transformation in Security Paradigm

There have been massive transformations in security paradigm with the changes in world order. The nature of security as a concept is less studied<sup>17</sup> and debated in interwar days. During cold war, limited and rigid lens of military security dominated<sup>18</sup> the literature of security studies. Military threats (objectively) to national security remained priority instead of social, political, economic and environmental threats. During the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, security discipline has been re-conceptualized and its' scope was broadened by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. It called for the explication of security threat with reference to referent object and signified the process of securitization of threat by political elite to pursue national security interest.

The end of cold-war, socio-political developments, complex geo-economic interdependency, technological innovations, rise of populism, increased population, resource depletion and uncertainties in political and strategic behaviour in international system have deconstructed classical prism of threat perception and making of national security policy. Buzan not only explicated the 'underdeveloped concept'<sup>19</sup> of security but rectified the deficiencies in 'conceptual literature on security' by unfolding that national security cannot be separated from national interest.<sup>20</sup>

Buzan's labelling of urgency of the 'security' and value of intensity<sup>21</sup> as the highly significant element of national security policy making process, not only explains Pakistan-

---

17 P. G. Bock and Morton Berkowitz, "The Emerging Field of National Security," *World Politics* 19, no.1 (1966): 122-36 (124).

18 Richard Smoke, "National Security Affairs" In *Hand Book of Political Science and International Relations*, ed., Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W Polsby (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publisher, 1975), 259.

19 Barry Buzan, *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Kumarian Press Lynne Reinner, 1983), 3-4.

20 For details see: Baldwin, David A. "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 5-26. Accessed March 28, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097464>

21 Buzan "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," 433.

India Sir Creek dispute but also unfolds the existential threats to primary interest being caused by the Sea Level Rise in the littorals of Arabian Sea. He emphasizes that security is when there are existential threats to designated referent object and states take extraordinary measures to handle them.<sup>22</sup> These measures are taken through the resources and special powers that normally are not acceptable at domestic level.<sup>23</sup> Since Sir Creek is not politically charged,<sup>24</sup> so Pakistani political and military elite need to take new measures to securitize and institutionalize the threats like Sea level rise.

### The Unfinished Agenda

Nature of the Sir Creek dispute dates back to the coming of British in Indian Subcontinent and its control in the hands of Muslim rulers. The Muslims gained its control in 1760 and ruled it up to 1813.<sup>25</sup> The commercial maritime significance of various sea ports in the region and urge of military control attracted the British Military Commander Charles Napier to invade and conquer Sindh at Battle of Miani<sup>26</sup> in 1843.<sup>27</sup> The conflict over the jurisdiction of Sir Creek with contradicting claims went through different unsettled settlement plans<sup>28</sup> before the Sindh's separation from Bombay presidency in 1935.<sup>29</sup>

---

22 Buzan, *et al*, *Security: A New Framework of Analysis* (UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 21.

23 Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," 25.

24 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India," 02.

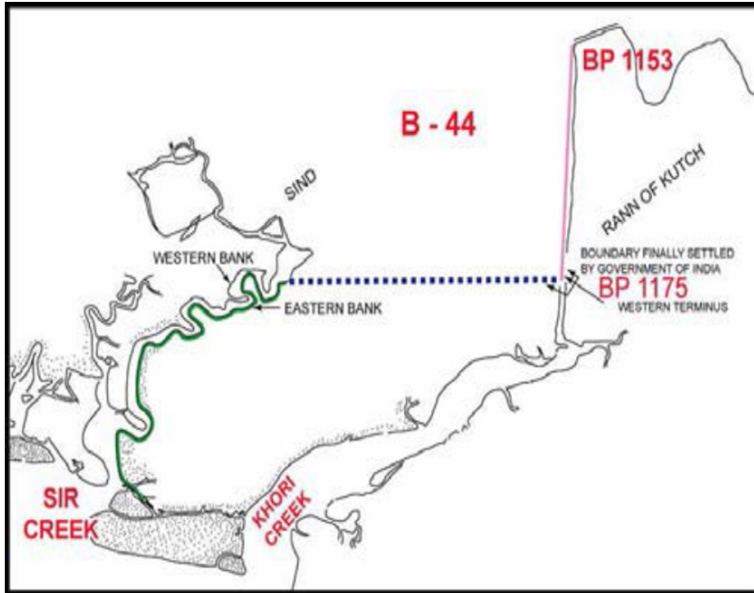
25 Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Sir Creek; The Origins and Development of the Dispute between Pakistan and India," *IPRI*, II, no. 2 (2007): 1-13 (1-2).

26 Matthew A. Cook, *Annexation and the Unhappy Valley: The Historical Anthropology of the Sindh's Colonization* (Brill N V Leiden Press, 2016), 24.

27 For details see: Sarah Ansari, "The Sind Blue Books of 1843 and 1844: The Political 'Laundering' of Historical Evidence," *The English Historical Review* 120, no. 485 (2005): 35-65.

28 Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Indus*, 21.

29 Riffat, *et al*, "A History of Sindh from a Regional Perspective: Sindh and Making of Pakistan", *JRSP* 53, no.1 (2016): 251-267 (253).  
[http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/18%20Paper\\_v53\\_1\\_16.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/18%20Paper_v53_1_16.pdf), Accessed March 29, 2021.



**Figure 1:** Map B – 44 Showing Sir Creek and Vicinity.<sup>30</sup>

The claims emerged between the Maharao of Kutch and Sindh over the border demarcation of Sir Creek near the littorals of Arabian Sea around 1907 and 1908.<sup>31</sup> Initially, Maharao of Kutch confused the claims and later on disputed it. The Bombay government asked for explanation of the incident over the complain of the then commissioner of Sindh.<sup>32</sup>

The issue was resolved in 1914 through the Map B-44 with the mutual consent of the both parties Maharao of Kutch and the Bombay Presidency via Resolution 1192<sup>33</sup> which explains that the eastern bank of Mouth Seer was the border between Sindh and Kutch from the top of the Creek (Head) to bottom of the Creek (Tail). Whereas, the same border in British archives is defined up to the Kori Creek at the time of British invasion to Sindh in 1843.<sup>34</sup> Later on, in

30 Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Indus*, 15.

31 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India," 14.

32 Ashutosh Misra, "The Sir Creek Boundary Dispute: A Victim of India-Pakistan Linkage Politics," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (2000): 91-96 (91).

33 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India," 14.

34 Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Indus*, 21.

1924, the pillars were erected, demarcated and the process completed in 1925.<sup>35</sup> It was demarcated under the proper legal chain of command with high hope that the issue is resolved permanently. It was also endorsed by the map of 1937-1938 survey general of the Sir Creek published by India.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, no issues raised even at the separation of Sindh from the Bombay in 1935 to the partition of subcontinent in 1947 when Sindh joined Pakistan and Kutch merged with India. Initially, both the states struggled with multiple post-partition issues and India in this struggle was so curious that she raised every issue related to boundary demarcation and interpretation of Radcliffe Award but did not agree to any solution. To settle these disputes an agreement was signed, at an Inter-Dominion Conference between India and Pakistan on December 14, 1948 to establish a tribunal for the adjudication and final settlement of the disputes and thereafter demarcating the boundary.<sup>37</sup>

The Indo-Pakistan Boundary Dispute Tribunal 1949-1950 was established and interestingly the dispute of Sindh-Kutch neither was brought before the commission nor discussed among the four disputes. This endorsed that there was not dichotomy of opinion and Sir Creek was a part of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan did not discuss or brought this issue before the tribunal because of its obvious status of being part of Sindh, which later on joined Pakistan. But it's an interesting question for academics<sup>38</sup> that why India did not raise issue of Sir Creek?

Firstly, India did so because she also knew it that it was the part of Pakistan. Secondly, the delusion of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>39</sup> that, Pakistan would join back to India

---

35 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India," 20.

36 Ali, "Maritime Issues between Pakistan and India," 20.

37 Ahmed Nafis, "The Indo-Pakistan Boundary Disputes Tribunal, 1949-1950," *Geographical Review* 43, no. 3 (1953): 329-337 (329).

38 Zubeida Hasan, "The International Status of Pakistan" *Pakistan Horizon* 18, no. 1 (1965): 46-55 (45) Accessed March, 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394666>

39 Farzana Sheikh, "Nehru's Image of The International Environment: A Content Analyses," *Pakistan Horizon* 26, no. 4 (1973): 43-49 (43), Accessed March 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41393190>



made her think that there was no need to dispute it.<sup>40</sup> Thirdly, the reason for not disputing it lies in the advantageous position of an unfair boundary award<sup>41</sup> that not only provided India the corridor to Kashmir but also the control of the head-works of the Indus Basin Canals,<sup>42</sup> which had technically direct link with Sir Creek. Fourthly, the then Indian government offered *No-War Pact*, to vindicate her position and maintain the *status quo* in all areas of disagreement. Similarly, President Ayub Khan also offered to sign a No-War Pact, provided India allow the Kashmiris to exercise their right of self-determination and submit to arbitration of all other disputes with Pakistan. The offer was rejected by India.<sup>43</sup> Fifthly, India's sense of superiority due to immense military equipment from Britain, played a consequential role.<sup>44</sup> Sixthly, India's strong naval power. Seventhly, look later on approach, because of building the Muzagon dockyard in Bombay with financial assistance of £ 4.7 million and technical advice for the construction of naval ships by the Britain also considerably impacted India's thinking for not disputing Sir Creek.<sup>45</sup>

The dispute remained dormant till the death of Nehru on May 27, 1964 even Pakistan offered a "moratorium" on the Kashmir question as a good will gesture.<sup>46</sup> But soon the complexities and problems emerged when India breached international border on Dec 6, 1965<sup>47</sup> and got huge military

---

40 Aftab Hussain Syed, "Indo-Pakistan Relations: A General Survey," *Pakistan Horizon* 24, no. 2 (1971): 13-17 (13), Accessed March 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41393071>

41 Firoz Khan "Partition and Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 19, no. 4 (1966): 339-343 (341), Accessed March 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41403830>

42 Syed, "Indo-Pakistan Relations," 14.

43 M. A. H. Ispahani, "The Alternative to the India-Pakistan Arms Race," *Pakistan Horizon* 20, no. 2 (1967): 109-19 (115) Accessed March 28, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41392885>

44 John L. Sutton and Geoffrey Kemp, *Arms to Developing Countries 1945-1965* (London: The Institute of Strategic Studies, 1966), 36.

45 For details see: Khalida Qureshi, "Arms Aid to India and Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 20, no. 2 (1967): 137-50.

46 Editorial Staff, "Pakistan's Reactions to Nehru's Death," *Pakistan Horizon* 17, no. 2 (1964): 168-73.

47 Farzana Khan, "The Rann of Kutch Dispute," *Pakistan Horizon* 18, no. 4 (1965): 374-84 (78).

support<sup>48</sup> from other sides of the world. India triggered Pakistan into a series of deliberate and provocative acts after the conflict in the Rann of Kutch.<sup>49</sup> However, cease-fire agreement was signed with contradictory claims over the status of border. Pakistan claimed that the Rann remained un-demarcated throughout the British period and border lay somewhere along the center of the Rann, approximately beside the 24<sup>th</sup> degree of latitude. Whereas, India claimed that Sindh-Kutch border was historically well established and recognized border and lay roughly along the edge of Rann and entirely belong to Kutch. On February 19, 1968, Indo-Pakistani Western Boundary Case Tribunal settled the dispute and awarded decision in favour of Pakistan's claim over the Rann of Kutch<sup>50</sup> which Indian government accepted with huge domestic criticism and heavy heart.<sup>51</sup>

The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was the result of the search of a hegemonic ally to ensure Indian interest by altering the geography of sub-continent<sup>52</sup> even at the cost of endangering South Asian peace. Moscow explicitly stated the very same Indian engagement only a step towards viable Asian security system.<sup>53</sup> During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, the former mounted a naval blockade of East

---

48 Khalida Qureshi, "Arms Aid to India and Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 20, no. 2 (1967): 45-146.

49 Khalida Qureshi, "Diplomacy of the India-Pakistan War," *Pakistan Horizon* 18, no. 4 (1965): 357-73 (62).

50 Aziz A. Munshi, "The Background and Basis of the Rann Of Kutch Award," *Pakistan Horizon* 23, no. 1 (1970): 37-50.

51 Shah Sikander Ahmed "River Boundary Delimitation and the Resolution of the Sir Creek Dispute between Pakistan and India", *Vermont Law Review* 34, no.357, (2009) 358. Accessed March 29, 2021 <https://lawreview.vermontlaw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/shah.pdf>

52 Jain Anvesh "Interpreting the 1971 Indo-Soviet Cooperation Treaty as a Turning Point in South Asian Strategic History" *Synergy: The Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies* May 27, 2020, Accessed April 01, 2021 <https://utsynergyjournal.org/2020/05/27/interpreting-the-1971-indo-soviet-cooperation-treaty-as-a-turning-point-in-south-asian-strategic-history/>

53 Rao R. V. R. Chandrasekhara, "The Brezhnev Plan and the Indo-Soviet Treaty: Expectations and Frustrations" *Economic and Political* 8, no. 46 (1973): 2061-2065 (2060-2061).

Pakistan<sup>54</sup> as an extension of the above policy. Much changed as a result of 1971 war with severe political, strategic to geographical loss to Pakistan<sup>55</sup> resulting into signing Shimla Agreement in 1972 to restore peace.<sup>56</sup> There were popular opinion that it will induce short-term peace and long-term disappointments of marginalizing Pakistan's interest with reference to border disputes as bleak in future.<sup>57</sup>

Later on, uncertainty of peace in the Pakistan-India Dyad<sup>58</sup> in South Asia region and developments like Brezhnev called for Asian talks in Nov, 1973 for collective Asian Security<sup>59</sup>, India's nuclear test in 1974<sup>60</sup>, changing strategic rift among US-USSR in 1979<sup>61</sup>, Brasstacks crisis of 1987<sup>62</sup>, disintegration of Soviet Union and change in

- 
- 54 Zubeida Mustafa, "USSR and Indian Action in East Pakistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 24, no. 4 (1971): 66-74(60) Accessed March, 31, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41393096>
- 55 Akbar S. Zaidi, "The Promise of Democracy" *Dawn*, September 30, 2017, [https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=30\\_09\\_2017\\_702\\_001](https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=30_09_2017_702_001)
- 56 Muhammad Sajid Malik "Pakistan-India Relations: An Analytical Perspective of Peace Efforts," *Security Studies ISSI* 39, no.1, (2019), Accessed March 31, 2021, <http://issi.org.pk/pakistan-india-relations-an-analytical-perspective-of-peace-efforts/>
- 57 Zulifqar Ali Bhutto, "The Shimla Accord," *Pakistan Horizon* 25, no. 3 (1972): 3-4.
- 58 Narayanan Raviprasad, "The India-Pakistan Dyad: A Challenge to the Rest or To Themselves", *Asian Perspective* 34, no. 4 (2010): 165-190 (166), Accessed March 31, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704738>
- 59 Weinraub Bernard, "Brezhnev Calls for Asian Talks," *The New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1973, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/11/30/archives/brezhnev-calls-for-asian-talks-he-signs-15year-accord-in-new-delhi.html>
- 60 Farzana Shakoor "Nuclearization of South Asia and Kashmir Dispute," *Pakistan Horizon* 51, no. 4 (1998): 67-79 (67); Malik Mahvish, "Nuclear Normalcy: A Reality Check of India's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Record," *Strategic Studies ISSI* 39, no. 2 (2019): 18-32.
- 61 See details: Gaddis John Lewis, "The Long Peace: Elements of the Stability in the Post-War International System," *International Security* 10, no. 4 (1986): 99-142; Stephen P. Cohen, *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Monohar, 1995).
- 62 P. R. Chari, P.I. Cheema, Stephen P. Cohen, *Perception, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), 1.

world order<sup>63</sup> led new developments that blurred Sir Creek among most priority issues between Pakistan and India.

The Post-Cold war brought a new momentum into the dispute when the first round of talks on Sir Creek on June 2, 1989 discussed only essential aspects and even the first bilateral visit of Indian Prime Minister on July 16-17, 1989 since 1960 remained unproductive.<sup>64</sup> The second and third rounds of talks in 1990, 1991 respectively ended without productive outcome and progress in the matter. The fourth round of talks led intense logical debate leading the issue towards solution by discussing the technical sides of delineation of maritime boundary demarcation of Sir Creek. It summed up without any breakthrough due to theoretical difference from legal perspectives over maritime demarcation solutions. The fifth round of talks started on November 5-6, 1992 and technical issues were addressed but did not reach to any workable position.<sup>65</sup> In 1994, *Non-Paper* was issued by India declaring her positions on the dispute and in 1996 declaration was made by Pakistan on technical sides of issue but both steps concluded at no progress.<sup>66</sup>

The sixth round of talks was held at foreign secretary level first in June, 1997 and then in September, 1998, both the countries agreed on establishing separate working committees. Talks on Sir Creek were held by those working groups as part of the composite dialogue in November, 1998 concluded without substantial development as a result of India's denial to resolve it through internationalization of the dispute and arching it to bilateral level as per Shimla Agreement. It was a progressive peace call by Pakistan to bring peace in South

---

63 Yurlov N .Felix, "Shifting Patterns in the New World Order," *World Affairs* 2, no.1 (1998): 60-72.

64 A. G Noorani, "Easing the Indo-Pakistan Dialogue on Kashmir: Confidence Building Measures for the Siachen Glacier, Sir Creek and Wuler Barrage Disputes," The Henry L. Stimson Center, *Occasional Paper* no, 16 (April, 1994), 17, Accessed April 02, 2021, [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/occasionalpaper16\\_1.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/occasionalpaper16_1.pdf)

65 Meena, "The Geopolitics of Sir Creek: An Evolution," 100.

66 Ashutosh Misra, "The Sir Creek Boundary Dispute: A Victim of India-Pakistan Linkage Politics," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (2000): 91-96 (93).

Asia by looking into the matter beyond the traditional lens of anchoring everything to Shimla Agreement. India ignored it once again and 20<sup>th</sup> Century turned into a new century with new beginning of security architect without finishing old agenda.

### **The New Beginning of the Unfinished Agenda**

The changing events in the lap of time, shapes the national, regional and international interests. As the time changes interest changes, priorities change friends change, old friends become enemy and foe becomes friends.<sup>67</sup> Developing nations are more eager and sensitive,<sup>68</sup> when there is challenge to their primary and vital interest. So, to pursue interest in the ambiguity of time that shapes tomorrow and compel nations to take necessary actions against any potential threat. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century national interest was more inclined to domestic determinants and national security specific<sup>69</sup> but the 20<sup>th</sup> Century unfolds the significance of regional and international interest as strong determinant in foreign policy process.

Therefore, the developments and events that occurred in the second half the 20<sup>th</sup> Century changed the shape of international politics and global map.<sup>70</sup> The new world order in post-cold war shaped the beginning of the new era with more focus on maritime security for geo-economic to geo-strategic affairs.<sup>71</sup> The economic growth of Gulf countries, geo-economic and strategic interest of

---

67 Heller A. Mark, "The Use & Abuse of Hobbes: The State of Nature in International Relations," *Polity* 13, no. 1 (1980): 21-32 (23); Accessed April 2, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3234689>

68 Sylvius Max Handman, "The Sentiment of Nationalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1921): 104-121 (114); Accessed April 2, 2021, [doi:10.2307/2142664](https://doi.org/10.2307/2142664)

69 Anthony Lake "Defining the National Interest" *The Academy of Political Science* 34, no. 2, (1981): 202-13 (203); Accessed April 2, 2021, [doi:10.2307/1173801](https://doi.org/10.2307/1173801).

70 Elizabeth A. Cobbs "Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Foreign Policy of the Peace Corps," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 1 (Winter-1996): 79-105 (96); Accessed April 2, 2021, [www.jstor.org/stable/24913446](https://www.jstor.org/stable/24913446)

71 Lieutenant John F. Bradford, "The Growing Prospects for Maritime Security Cooperation in South East Asia," *Naval War College Review*, 58, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 63-86 (63); Accessed April 02, 2021 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26394205.pdf>

developed countries, rise of globalization and world trade organization, availability of huge manpower, increased populations, rising industrial capacity of developing countries and China as determinant factor in foreign policy of Asian countries brought Arabian Sea in specific and IOR in general in the limelight of international politics.<sup>72</sup>

The coastline of Pakistan stretches from 990 km to 1050 km and splits into Sindh Coast and Makran Coast with divergent claims over its total length from Jiwani to Jati (J2J).<sup>73</sup> Pakistan has an opportunity and capability to rise peacefully as sea power in the wake of finest sea ports, transit routes and potential choke points but the nuclear neighbour India increases sensitivity of maritime security challenges in the Arabian Sea. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Sir Creek dispute has multiple security dimensions like social, political, economic, and environmental other than military security in the wake of Sea Level Rise.<sup>74</sup> The changing contours of geography, persistent delay in conflict resolution and Indian military buildup in Indian Ocean<sup>75</sup> with urge of becoming sea power is not only offensively exacerbating the spheres of maritime security threats in Arabian Sea but disturbing balance of power in South Asia. It has severe ramification at national, regional and international level without resolving unfinished agenda.

---

72 For detail see, Yang Shih-yueh, "Power Transition, Balance of Power, and the Rise of China: A Theoretical Reflection about Rising Great Powers," *China Review* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 35-66.

73 Humayun Asaf and Naghmana Zafar, "Pakistan's 'Blue Economy': Potential and Prospects", *Policy Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (2014): 58; "A Handbook on Pakistan's Coastal and Marine Resources," Ministry of Climate Change Government of Pakistan (MFF Pakistan, 2016): 07; "The Karachi Coastline", *The News*, June 12, 2015, Accessed April 02, 2021. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/45548-the-karachi-coastline>; "Whoever Rules the Waves, Rules the World" *Maritime Study Forum*, Accessed April 02, 2021, <https://www.maritimestudyforum.org/about-us/>

74 Bamber Jonathan and Aspinall Willy, "An Expert Judgment Assessment of Future Sea Level Rise from the Ice Sheets," *Nature Climate Change*, Online Edition, (Jan, 2013), Accessed April 03, 2021 <https://www.nature.com/articles/nclimate1778>

75 Arjun, "South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region: An Indian Perspective," *E-International Relations*, September 14, 2020, Accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/09/14/south-asia-and-the-indian-ocean-region-an-indian-perspective/>

At national level, the rising urge of naval nuclearization<sup>76</sup> of India has severe ramifications for the national security of Pakistan in the wake of enduring conflict over Sir Creek. No move or changing stance in Indian policy behaviour over Sir Creek is away from the Pakistan's extended Economic Exclusive Zone in IOR.<sup>77</sup> India's larger geo-political and geo-strategic ambitions in littorals of Arabian Sea to constitute her national interest in IOR with the help of great powers is a serious warning<sup>78</sup> to the region and Pakistan's national security. The rising sea level in the wake of such a development will adversely impact Pakistan's potentials to bring domestic investments in fisheries, tourism, agro-development, foreign direct investment on Islands, cultural heritage, archeological remains, trade routes, ports of Keti Bunder, Shah Bunder, hinder regional connectivity for commercial routes from maritime to land routes, survivability of eco-system and marvel creeks of Indus delta around the littorals Arabian Sea in IOR.

The Indian ports around the Gulf of Kutch and Gulf of Khambhat will get a new life if it gets serious to resolve the Sir Creek dispute by considering genuine right of Pakistan over Sir Creek. Maritime discourse on maritime security and significance unfolds the opportunities of ocean politics as defined by Alfred Mahan and Julian Corbett.<sup>79</sup> If the bone of contention is settled, the new economic and strategic agreements with Pakistan will convert South Asia into a rich energy and trade corridor. It will not only uplift the economics and social fabric, decrease poverty,

---

76 For details see, Rehman Iskander, "Drowning Stability: The Perils of Naval Nuclearization and Brinkmanship in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2012): 64-88.

77 Humayun Asaf and Naghmana Zafar, "Pakistan's 'Blue Economy': Potentials and Prospects", *Policy Perspectives*, 58.

78 Maria Bastos, "The Indian Ocean and the Rise of a Multi-polar World Order: The Role of China and India", *Policy Perspectives* 11, no. 2 (2014): 17-2 (18), Accessed April 3, 2021, doi:10.13169/polipers.11.2.0017.

79 Attiq-ur-Rehman, "Maritime Politics in South Asia and Naval Compulsions of CPEC for Pakistan," *Policy Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (2018): 81-94 (84), Accessed April 03, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/polipers.15.1.0081>

eradicate illiteracy, reduce unemployment in Pakistan but as well as in India.<sup>80</sup>

At regional level, Pakistan and India hold prodigious significance and have a determinant factor in foreign policy of regional countries. Maritime positions of both the countries hold key economic and strategic significance in the littorals of Arabian Sea for themselves and their regional allies. The maximum wars, battles, conflicts and disputes in the region were largely geographical (land based) due to the traditional land routes for trade and commerce in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Whereas, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the security challenges are exacerbated to maritime security sea routes and region is primarily vital for United States and China.<sup>81</sup>

While protecting the interest, there will be a new momentum of arms race; both conventional and nuclear, and new geo-economic and geo-strategic alliances of regional countries with great power will lead uncertainty for undefined time. Power politics may rise and adversely impact the sea communication lines in Arabian Sea and enhance long-term threats to collective interest, profoundly non-traditional but multi-layered.<sup>82</sup> India's thinking of Indian Ocean as *India's ocean*<sup>83</sup> is a severe threat to regional peace in the wake of United States support to her hegemonic ambitions by projecting her as the guardian of US interest.<sup>84</sup> The amicable solution either bilaterally or

---

80 Talha Ahmed, "Six things Pakistan and India can do instead of Fighting," *Dawn*, October 12, 2014, Accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1137291>

81 Syed Muhammad Ali, "The U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry and its Implications for Pakistan," *Stimson*, December 1, 2020, Accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.stimson.org/2020/the-u-s-china-strategic-rivalry-and-its-implications-for-pakistan/>

82 Cordner Lee, "Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 66-88 (70-71), Accessed April 04, 2021 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26397244.pdf>

83 David Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?" *Security Challenges* 6, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 1-20 (02), Accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26459796.pdf>

84 Hassan Muhammad Abbas, "Growing China-India Competition in the Indian Ocean," *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 77-89 (79), Accessed April 04, 2021.



third party intervention is much needed to address the trans-boundary disputes in the littorals of Arabian Sea. To do so, Pakistan's attempt to internationalize Sir Creek issue for the lasting peace in South Asia has been endorsed by many states but so far rejected by India.

It is a grim reality that both Pakistan and India still continues to see each other as enduring rivals whose pursuit of interests lies in a direct contradiction to the other. Multiple opportunities to resolve the persistent disputes have been wasted by India due to her domestic pressure. It looks that India feels pride in taking the burden of traditional rivalry and remains of partition plan from the British legacy as an unfinished agenda. It needs to realize that across the Cold-war United States and USSR found Pakistan-India dyad as a golden coin to win the toss of holding the international order in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and favour to pursue their personal interest in South Asia.<sup>85</sup>

### Conclusion

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Pakistan-India from maritime lens are the *golden coin* for Chinese and US foreign policy-makers to change the course of history in South Asia. Alfred Mahan predicted it much earlier while writing *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* that whosoever controls the sea, controls the future global politics. From geo-strategic angle, the littorals and Islands of Arabian Sea have emerged as extremely important region in global politics. It is a strong determinant of making both domestic and foreign policy. India needs to understand objectively that Pakistan is the gateway to regional economic growth, welfare, prosperity, safety, security and peace. It is the heart of Asia and geo-strategically in proximity to Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and Gulf countries in Arabian Sea. So instead of designing hegemonic policies India should focus on the enduring unfinished agenda and behave friendly to peace call of Pakistan for regional and global prosperity.

---

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/48544289.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A2ae0f74b1e30362da8abf377b5e6c31e>

85 Dowdy L. William and Trood B Russell, "The Indian Ocean: An Emerging Geostrategic Region," *International Journal* 38, no. 3 (summer, 1983): 432-433.