

The logo features a blue geometric shape composed of interconnected lines and dots, resembling a stylized network or a map of the Bay of Bengal region.

Bay of Bengal Conversation 2023

Rising Tides

Studio Session: “Security Architecture of the New Asia Pacific”

Speakers

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Bec Strating, Associate Professor, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia (Moderator)

Bec Strating, “The region that we exist within, so maybe we can get into that conversation during today's session. But as we see this new language of geopolitics emerging as the great powers just all for influence and power. We're also conscious that the costs of conflict are likely to be high for all sides across the region. So today, we really want to talk about how likely it is for the region to become a flash point for the next war between great powers. What kinds of new architecture or how do we bolster existing architecture across Asia Pacific to try to prevent or manage conflict, and how we can think about managing these rivalries or tensions after secondary and middle and secondary power states? So, I would like to begin with you, General Arun K. Sahni, former Army commander of the Indian Army. I will start with you by asking you a very broad question to kick off the conversation because there's so much that we can talk about, but really to start us off, what are the key trends or emerging geo-strategic flash points that we need to be paying the most attention to across Asia Pacific or Indo-Pacific?”

Arun K Sahni, “Sounds great! Thank you very much, Bec. Firstly, let me thank Zillur and CGS for having got me here again. It's always a pleasure to come to Dhaka, and I think he actually started the trend. This is my fifth visit in last one year, so for different events that happen, but it's always good to come here and good to see old friends and make some new friends once you come to these conferences. I think, just to put the Asia Pacific and Indo-Pacific at rest, let me say the Indo-Pacific structure for the is actually the requirements of the US. Because I think the Indo-Pacific geographical lines are more related to the Pascom command. It doesn't care for the center or the Africa com, so that's how the Indo-Pacific is. When India looks at the Indo-Pacific, we look at it in the Indian Ocean region, and you look at it from the east coast of Africa to the area of what you want to say, is the would-be what Western Pacific primarily or Eastern Pacific primarily, that's

what you would look at. So, these are the two constructs. But I think more importantly is when you look at the New Asia Pacific. Why this sudden interest? I think it's not a new Asia-Pacific. New Asia existed, the Pacific existed, the nation-states existed. But what has happened is that undoubtedly the economic center of gravity has shifted from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific region. If you see the growth patterns that have happened and the economic growth patterns that have happened, if the here, the growth patterns would be around 4.2-4.3%. If you look at now towards the Euro-Atlantic, you're looking at 1.82%. So, I think, geo-economics has been a driving force as far as a key element to the emerging geo-strategic trends. The other aspect is geopolitics, and why is geopolitics come in? Because I think contestation, when it comes in with rising paths and existing paths, the problem then comes into being, and this is linked also to the question that you ask: whatever there is contestation between two competing parts, whether it is competition, whether it is conflict, whether it's cooperation, whatever kind of contestation that happens on any spectrum or any lines of differentiation. Those can become flash points when both of them have an interest, which is a clash, whereas an area like the Asia Pacific, where there are smaller nations which were carved out a lot of them after colonial predominance, have borderlines which have problems. But those borderlines are linked bilaterally or trilaterally to nations, and those will never really do a flash point, but they would be causes of conflict. So today, if I had to look at, what are the flash points? So, before that, that is first point that I wanted to make. Second, let me just say why is security architecture and I think there are very learned people sitting here those who've been in this field for a much longer period, being the practitioners who emulated into the areas of dialogue and understanding and voicing, and opinion. But what I would say is, I mean, thanks to the West's failure, you had nation-states. So, everything looked at the defense of nation-states. You looked at your territorial boundaries; the Second World War changed that. I mean people like

Water Lipman and people like those who wrote various articles. Stop talking about looking at security, defense, and security from the perspective of the core values of those nation states. So, it's not just the territorial, but my core values were impacted, then I need to get worried, and then, I think, the beard guy was Robert McNamara, who spent seven years the defense secretary of defense for the US both with the I think, between 61 and 69, took out this essay on the sense of security, and where he said security is no longer about the state, it is about the citizen, and anything that impacts the citizen is an issue that matters, and what impacts the citizen? Water, climate change, food security, and energy security. So, the whole gamut of security architecture has changed. So today, when you look at the security architecture of Asia specific, it is not fighting a military alliance of Cold War 1.4 where you had the NATO and you had the war, so because both were fighting and had battle lines drawn in Europe, so everybody was ready to just go to war and jump across the fence. No, that is not the so. So, and that is why the security architecture has lines of operation, lines of engagement, which are phenomenal, and that's why the role of bilateral, unilateral partnerships exists, and if there are alliances, but more often, it's going to be partnerships because in a polycentric world order, I can't say that I don't want to talk to you; I am linked to you. I mean, it's like the US and China. China has over six what about 400 billion dollars of Treasury bonds, and the kind of trade that happens between the US and China there's an unbeaten linkage. If they decide to freeze the bonds, China will cry, and if China wants to cash them, then US will cry. So, it's a polycentric world order. You can't say it's not Russia, India, the US, and the Soviet Union. So, the world has changed, so today, when you're looking at security architecture, let's just not talk about military alliances fighting each other. I mean, that's not the issue. Because the challenges here are different. So just to sum it up, what has changed? Four things have changed. There used to be a talk about a decade back the rise of China. I'm sorry; that's history. China has

risen. It is a diversionist bar; it wants to sort of dominate the political landscape and which is leading to various geo-strategic trends that are dominating and that is coming out of competition between the two parts and their rivalry. So, if you have to look at this area, let's look at it at East Asia, which is Japan. South Korea, that belt, which is the East China Sea; you look at Taiwan, which becomes the Falcon; you look at the South China Sea; and these are the three areas that you would look at, where again there is nuclear powers like North Korea, which is rabid which creates instability, which may be a proxy for China but is also addressing the concerns of the US. So, there is a challenge there. Then you come to Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is, by and large, being the economic hub; it has conformed, and being it's been sensible enough to ensure it's balanced the environment as it stands today. When you come to South Asia, there are territorial issues, which are historical anomalies of the independence after the colonial parts left. So, there are conflicting issues that will remain. And when you come to West Asia, where the fundamentalism seems to have overtaken, that's a flash point area. So, when I look at all these areas of the conflict zone, there are conflict areas that will happen, but they are limited in concept and scope, and parties that can involve. But if I have to look at it from flash points, flash points exist only in the area where there's a contestation between the US and China, and where are the East China Sea? If I have to look at four flash points, and I think the Australians, I think, very articulately talked about it, was it your university, or in one of the talks that I remember in one of the papers, has been done very beautifully? North Korea because of its nuclearization. Once you've got the Korean Peninsula, which is a flash point, A flash point because you will have one being supported by China and the other being supported by the US, and there are treaties that have been linked, whether it's with Japan, whether it's with Indonesia, whether it is with countries with the Philippines. So, you have these kinds of treaties, so there is a clash of these two players. So, you've got the East China Sea,

you have the Korean Peninsula, and you've got the South China Sea. Because the South China Sea is the lifeline for 57 to 60% of energy and other kinds of trade that goes through it, So, everybody is impacted. So, it's going to be a flash point; it will flare out. You can't restrict it between two boys who want to sort of fight in a boxing ring; everybody else gets affected, and so, you'll get a greater, and so if I had to look at it, flash points exist only towards the Eastern Pacific side, which I would say the East China Sea, South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan. If it manifests in the manner is being talked about by the US that there would be an occupation of Taiwan. So, these are the four areas of conflict which might happen in South Asia between India-China, India-Pakistan, and localized efforts; nobody else is going to come in and jump into the bandwagon. You might have people supporting you, creating diplomatic pressure and instruments, but we will fight, so that's where I would leave it now. Thank you.”

Bec Strating, “Thank you so much. You've really mapped out the intellectual terrain for us. It's always hard thing to start the conversation off with such a broad topic. But Ishfaq, about turning to you, I mean, you're a retired Air Commander and a security specialist here in Bangladesh. I mean, one of the things that we tend to do is focus a lot on the big powers (the US and China) and strategic competition, and there are very good reasons as a ruin articulated for why we focus on them. But what is the view from Bangladesh around some of these strategic rivalries and the economic decoupling that's going on, But also around some of these key East Asian flash points? I mean, how, from the perspective of where we're sitting here in Bangladesh, do middle powers and smaller powers navigate these massive shifting trends in the economic and military balance of powering the region?”

Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, "We are talking about New Asia Pacific. So as Arun was talking, I was just thinking that we are actually Asia-Pacific. We are not new. Why? Because, you see, for thousands of years there has been a very close contact between what we call East Asia and Southeast Asia, South Asia, and especially Bangladesh. You know, from Bangladesh, a place not very far from here, the preacher, a Buddhist preacher, what's his name? Atish Dipankar. Sorry! Atish Dipankar was just about 20 miles from here, carried thousands about 1400–1500 years back, all these scriptures Buddhist scriptures went to China, across the Himalayas, and spread the Buddhist religion there. And then Hyecho and Xuanzang, two very famous preachers—you know, they are intellectuals they came back from China to Comilla and Chittagong, which is not far from here part of Bangladesh, and this thing was going on. And then, from here the Buddhism and Hinduism spread to the whole of Southeast Asia—Thailand, you know, Indonesia, Java, and all. So, the also one of the Chinese admirals who came sailed all the way came also Sri Lanka, and also this thing was there. But then, what happened? The one major war, World War II. In World War II, the Japanese forces came all the way occupied countries of the countries and came along the border of Bangladesh in the south, Teknaf, and in India as well, and those are the last and the head quarter of these forces stretching from Teknaf to Comilla, which is just about 30 to 40 miles from here, the center. So, we were conducting the battlefield from Teknaf to Comilla, and that was the last stage, and it was the Japanese Army but also our Indian national army led by Subhas Chandra Bose; he was also they are also fighting here. So, this Asia-Pacific security architecture is actually not new, although we are viewing it. Now, he was talking about Arun, who was talking about Colonial Legacy. Many of the frontiers here and which have become flash points today. Flash points today are of colonial our history he just returned from he said the conference on

Silchar *and Select* Conference. Okay, then I told him that Silchar should have been part of us because they were all Bengalis. When the Bengals map was drawn, two of the districts Cachar here on the east and Goalpara on the West, they taken out to be to Assam, and now they are stranded Bengalis in Assam. They should have been part of Bengal, and if they were part of Bengal, they would have been maybe part of Bangladesh today. So, these borders are all wrong. Now, another flash point is that they are having problems with the Arunachala, which the Chinese say is the 'South Tibet' and also on the other side, your Ladakh area, they just about it's been 2 years or one and a half years they had a huge conflict, you know, not very human power there although not ended up in fight but both sides are prepared, and on this side also, I can see, and it's so clear on Google both the Chinese and the Indians are preparing for another confrontation which was in 1962 they had a confrontation there but if they have a confrontation now, it will be much bigger and much wider because they are much more prepared now. I can see because of my Air Force background. I can see how the airfields have been constructed and how, the you know, the T-X have been made in hardened shelters all the way you know at least one airfield in the Assam area. Now, as a Bangladeshi, I'm not that much worried about what goes on in Ladakh, but if there is a problem here now, China, we always think of think China we think of good beings, and China is actually very close to us, 100 kilometers from northern Bangladesh is the Chinese entry point of Nathu La. Now, Nathu La is the front where you had a problem in 64, and 67. There was a conflict, but right now it is all the road trade going on and all, but if it becomes hot, that's a problem for Bangladesh. Because it's just 100 kilometers north of us. So, you know, these borders are again you know that, these borders were drawn during the colonial times and the at that time China was down with opium. You know, the Colonial Powers forced them to take opium, and the Opium War was so the new China. As he said, China is rising. Now they are asking for the region of the colonial

borders strong, and they don't, you know. Now the question is that if the colonial borders are not to be respected, you know, then we are end we will end up in an endless fight like the problem you have with Pakistan and Afghanistan. This line is known as the 'Durand Line,' drawn between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the British draw it on a China pencil you see and the Chinese have you see representation there, so the same way they did it after the war, they drew it across Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the border, and now the Afghans, no government, even the Taliban government, nobody has agreed to this line, and they say no, our border goes up to the Indus River, the pish, and all belongs to us, not to you. So, these are the problems. So, I we have to continue, but as rightly say that the peace and the more we talk of peace and, you know, our infrastructure cure and our business and industrial cooperation, and in also human cooperation, I mean, the better it is than fighting because that will not help anybody. So, if you come down to it, I fully agree with him is that North Korea today is a what do you say odd ball in the court. He sees we don't know what's tomorrow what she's going to do and especially when everything depends on one person: he thinks, he watches, he acts, and nobody else everybody takes note of what he says; otherwise, they vanish. So, after that, Taiwan is definitely a problem because again historical legacy, but as far, I know that the most Taiwan is today. About 80% of the time, all of them were born long after 1914, and most of them before that few are arrived. but they have always seen Taiwan as a dependent as a sort of separate entity, and there is a survey says that about 80% of people want to identify themselves as Taiwan, but here, including Bangladesh, we just say one China, and we do not have any direct communications of any sort of trade and commerce with Taiwan. But Taiwan is an industrial country, very small, but very advanced educated they and the country is very we may come down later on. The country is small but very well prepared for defense, and any war over there will be costly for both sides and, of course, for the world also.

Now, as far as Bangladesh specifically that you ask that question about Bangladesh's position. Now we have challenges and opportunities. Challenges and opportunities arise because Bangladesh is positioned in such a way that we have China, as I said, just 100 kilometers away. We have India. China has already risen, and we keep saying that India is rising. Yesterday also, someone said that India has been rising but not risen, but it is rising. Because from their 40th GDP now today, they have almost 10th, and Modi said it is next visit will be. So, although the income is still GDP HDI index will still be low, but India is the next economic power, and Bangladesh, because it struggles between the two. You know, we have the advantage of taking the best from both sides. We have our largest trading partner is China, although China mostly we import and very little export. On India side also, the next is India the again most import and the export by the way, rising, and 1 billion today out of 1 billion our business. Okay, it's rising. It's rising, which is very positive, with China and the Western world is our biggest export markets. The United States is the single largest export market, and the European Union is the next. It takes together European and Indian, and so it is our almost all our exports are there. So, this is pro, you can say, opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh is to keep both sides happy. I mean, we today in Bangladesh, many of the infrastructures are being built on the Chinese loan because China has a trillion-dollar, they have but again, contrary to popular you know, perception still World Bank, Asian development, you know, IMF these are our major producers. Japan is very strong. Japan is, I think, that one of the major investors in this country, and with the Japanese economic zone coming up, Japan is going to be very important, and as far as I'm concerned, Japanese investments are really good investments, and then, of course, Koreans are also there. So, Bangladesh is in a very comfortable position, and because it is in a comfortable important position so the interest is also great. I mean, these sorts of conferences in the past, we only had conferences how to solve

the food problem. Or, how to you know, alleviate poverty? And, you know, that sort of thing. But today, the more concentration on the importance of Bangladesh in that regional and also global. So, I think, I'll stop there and we can discuss more about it, but let me say that it is we are sitting on a center stage of opportunities and challenges.”

Bec Strating, “Thank you very much for the conversation. Yes, there is a sort of sorry; there is a sort of consensus that there are a range of sort of border disputes and tensions across the *Indo-Pacific* region, but the key flash points are actually in East Asia, and a lot of those flesh points are maritime and territorial in nature. So, I would like to get your perspective here, and Ishfaq mentioned the important role of Japan. But how is Japan using alliances and partnerships with states like the United States and India, and others to bolster its vision for regional order? What's the kind of view of the desirable security architecture that's coming from Japan?”

Satoru Nagao, “Okay, the security architecture is changing in this region. I think, for a long time, this region the security architecture, so how to deterge conflict? How to deterge any crisis in this region based on the "Hub and *Spokes*" system. “Hub” is the United States, and “spokes” are US allies. So, US and Japan this is a bilateral ally, and US and Australia are allies; US and South Korea; US and Philippine; US and Thailand—this kind of bilateral relationship consists of one system called “hub and *spokes*.” This is the security architecture. In this system, all of the information gets to the United States, and the US controls everything, so that's why this system itself heavily relies on the United States, that is a security system in the traditional ‘one is here’ approach. But at the same time, now we are changing this security architecture to the network-based because in the “hub and *spokes*” system, both Australia and Japan aligned with United States, but Japan Australia is not aligned. So, that's why only the United States manages this system, but

when we see the recent flash point in many areas of China we can see, we can say one thing this system is not enough to detect China. So, because China is rich, China has money, and China invests heavily on the military modernization. In this case, the US-China military balance is changing. Of course! still the US is stronger than China, but at the same time, we need to say, we need new security architecture. "In this case, the US asks its allies and partners to share the security burden. That's why the new network-based security system is emerging as a new system in this region. For example, Japan cooperates with Australia and shares the presence in the south. This is a part of the US role in the past, but US after this, evolving security, but that is network-based. So, many minilaterals, coalitions including AUKUS, or each formed for a network-based security architecture that is new one and when we see the pattern of the China territorial expansion, we can say, this is very effective. Paracel is we can see in the south in the past, for example, in 1950s when France withdrawn from Indo-Pacific, they took half the Paracel island. In the 1970s, the US withdrew from Vietnam, and China took another half of the pattle. In the 1980s, the Soviet troops by Vietnam China took six features, and in 1990, when US shifted its focus China took the expansionist strategy. So, every time the military balance has changed the power vacuum, they found they try to steal it. That is part of China's expansion. So, to deal with China, we need to maintain military balance, but I have already said, China is rich; that is a problem. So, in this case, how to deal with sharing the security burden is a matter, and each Japan and Australia, and India cooperates with each other. China needs to divide their military expansion multidirectional against Japan against India. China, that is very important for that point to and against South China in Australia Southeast Asian countries here. So, that's why this is a new way to maintain military balance to deterge China's territorial expansion. So, that's why this network-based security system

is important. So, from "Hub and *Spokes*" to the network-based system, that is a new trend of the security architecture in this state. Thank you."

Bec Strating, "Thank you. I'm going to ask a question sticking with you for a minute Satoru on that that answer. Because maintaining a military balance of power can carry its own risks for example, in activating a security dilemma and what you're describing there is a kind of network-base I agree with you. I think, that does really actually define the new or the emerging security architecture through the use of strategic manuals through the use of increased defense cooperation and through the term integrated deterrence which is one that has appeared in in US declaratory policy. But my question is, in trying to maintain this military balance by deterring China through the use of increased military cooperation and buildup does that carry the risk of intensifying the likelihood of conflict in the region and are there other forms of cooperation that might alleviate the risk of conflict."

Satoru Nagao, "It should rely on the gap between the US military power and the Chinese military power, I believe, because when we check which side won the last three competitions, we can see one thing. The bigger power won the competition, of course. For example, the one with 32 countries from the winner side and the four country consist the loser side. So, this means a bigger group, a bigger power won. One similar or two in this case 54 versus eight, including Japan but and US-Soviet Cold War 54 versus 26. So, this means that if the US wants to deterge the China's activity, not security dilemmas, they need to show that, US needs to prove they will be the winners. That's why China cannot do that something like that. In this case, they need or the number of allies, number of sizes of power, and US has 53 former 3D bases including NATO's 31, and if include Taiwan in this case, indeed number is 53 now, a decent one, of course. So, but China has only

north Korea so that's why 53 versus one. So, each US exploits this situation. There is a possibility the US can win and China hesitate to challenge against US reach order. So, that's why the two deterge situations. How many countries cooperate with each other? It's a very important key. So, that's why, to avoid a security dilemma, we need to widen the gap between the US and China. In this case, cooperation is the key. That is my answer. Thank you very much.”

Bec Strating, “Thank you. Actually, I did want to come back to you on that. But can I add a question for you at the same time? Yes? So, I wanted your view on the emerging security architecture as Satoru explained it—this idea of networked, network-based architecture. But I also wanted to ask you whether you think that the emerging security architecture is much more likely to be based on might rather than right. That is, it's going to be more based on power than it is going to be based on rules, and the reason I ask you that is that this is a Bay of Bengal conversation, and actually, this has been the site of using international legal mechanisms to resolve border disputes between Bangladesh and India in the Bay of Bengal. So, I wanted to get your view on whether or not rights and rules are still going to play an important role in this emerging architecture.”

Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, “Thank you very much. First of all, to me, Professor Satoru, you know, the view of the mil architecture appeared to me to be what they call hawkish, a little hawkish in the sense that you have force to counter that and you have to overcome that. That's what probably you are saying that, the United States and its allies must get together be a stronger force to stop the Chinese expansion, but if you look from the Chinese point of view, they will say that we are only exercising our right, which has been denied to us for all these centuries of the colonial and in fact, again going back to the world, when Japan entered the war, the main aim of the Japanese administration was to reach the source of oil in the Middle East and also in Southeast Asia—

Bahama and Indonesia—because with their industrialization, they needed oil. The Chinese today is also looking for and because they have grown up their industrial base and everything, but they don't have they're looking for the root to the safe and, you know root to be to Europe and all which is secure, and much of what we say the Chinese expansionist ideas in you might say BRI and all are the result of the Chinese view that in future we are going to run short of the raw materials which others are being concerned. But I think that like we discussed yesterday also that as long as the countries are countries are tied together by economic relationships and the common interest you see, common interest of progress, the less and less will be the military option, physic military option. Actually, when you run into an arm, there is no entry. You create something the other and quite often in the military say suppose example, somebody designs a fantastic tank, then the government, others will say that now you designed something which will destroy that tank. So, you get into some EMP tank with that somebody puts an aircraft; you have to destroy that, and it ends in Endless, you know, an arm cycle, and who pays for it are the poor people the you know, ordinary people. So, this has led to our first world war, the second world war, the whole NATO. The Cold War was based on that the military the China is here, Soviet goes here, Americans go up there up then the Soviet go here, and ultimately it resulted in the total, you know, dismemberment of the Soviet Union. Not because it lost a war, but it you know, could not sustain economic and the same thing happened in Vietnam. You see, the how much bombing and how much you see every time you mentioned about also said that I end the war, but he could not, and Vietnam became; they did not lose any battle, but they lost the war. In America being there that time the number one military is not the real solution, and we wanted peace. For example, right now China and India have 30 billion dollars, and now every politician hoping China and India will think that should we have hot water. Should we continue to do so? That is our guarantee. So, in coming down to

Bangladesh also, we have this Challenge, and we still believe I mean, that's our policy that without taking any sides, we would encourage cooperation in every field—economic field, cultural field, people-to-people contact, for example. This sort of conference opens up people's you know, ideas and all, and we believe that living these problems maybe for the history to resolve itself. But for the present, we continue to work together, but then there are issues as bureaucratic ones you said for example one, I must agree that in China about the South China Sea, like in Bangladesh actually we have no problem. We have solved our way of Bengal, both with Myanmar and India and through United Nations architecture and negotiation, we have solved it. If we can solve it, why can't they do it in Indonesia, you know Vietnam and all China? Because China has unilaterally declared their '*nine-dash line*', and interestingly, not only the People's Republic of China even Taiwan say that is their line, and even Taiwan the government, which is there in Taiwan's demands the same border Arunachala they demand and they demand this eastern Ladakh as part of the Chinese region, although they don't have any mandate to do so, but the map is there. So, thing is that these are the issues that are rising, and knowing that Bangladesh is in some way we in the people as network, we right in the center we are up there in the Himalayas, and on this side the southeast Asia. So, we will continue to remain very important, but it is very important for our government and our foreign policymakers to stay balanced. At this time, we are under pressure from the West, especially from the United States, to probably be more candid about what we are going to do about Southeast Asian architecture of parts and things like that. But our government has refrained, and our people of I say, the People by we are not interested in their conflict, but we are interested in their business. We're interested in their infrastructure. For example, these you know, is the Kolkata-Dhaka Highway. This was Highway which was part of the Asian Highway, and it is go over Bangladesh, and from our side we have done everything right up to the Myanmar's

border. We have got four-lane highway going, but the Myanmar governments, because it's so close and all won't allow this to go on and have connected to me and then onwards to other all of in China. So, these are our future you have a Nathu-la border, no trades over there. Whole of Tibet's trading can be done through Bangladesh because that's the shortest. we have the roads and railway networks ready. We have three ports: Mongla Payra coming up and Chittagong itself, three ports ready to handle all this northeastern traffic, also the best way to get into the but it has atmosphere there and a sort of confidence in everybody that yes, these great groups can work. No, then Bangladesh should be benefited Northeast India benefited people of people to be that's what we have.”

Bec Strating, "Thank you very much. I did want to bring Arun into the conversation here. But before I do that, I would like to take this opportunity for our audience members here to ask you a question. So, this will be my last question, and then those of you in the audience who have a question, if you could use the microphone stands to ask it, and you might walk up to the microphone stand when you get an opportunity. But my last question to you is, really, you know, to reflect on some of the conversation between. Do you agree that the emerging security architecture is really the kind of network-based architecture that was described before? What role is there for institutions multilateral, mini-lateral institutions in CRI in trying to establish order or trying to prevent conflict from emerging in the region in the first place? But an additional kind of question is: with India, it seems that you know there is this movement towards, I guess, the United States through minilaterals like the quad. But it seems, from an outsider perspective like my own, to be driven by these shared concerns about China. I was going to say rising China, but let's say the risen China. How like-minded are these states, though? Like, is this concern around China

enough to really bind, for example, the Quad States together in a way that they will mobilize in case of conflict in the region?"

Arun K Sahni, "Okay, just let me put. I mean, I have a different take. I think it was very simplistic. I thought of military power. I mean, I'm strong; I become stronger; I have three people; I have 50 people. I think that's too simplistic to look at this problem because the world has changed. And I think, where does India really come in? As you said, India's role as a middle part, and because of her geographical location and the domination that we have in the Indian Ocean, the manner that's a geographical reality. You have a role to play in the future world order that's going to emerge, and in the future world order that's going to emerge, it's a polycentric-linkages will remain perspective. India, when we went to war or had the conflict in Galvan, our bilateral trade was \$91 billion. It's gone up to \$130 billion; this is after all the negative lists that we put out of the Chinese. So, in spite of the problems, trade has continued. Are you getting it? So, I think it's no longer going to be a clean, black and white kind of a situation. So, how do I see it? There are three ways to look at deterrence, and this is where the quad, and just one more question on the quad. Quad actually preceded the rise of China. The Quad was not a reflection on China. Quad came up after the tsunami of Indonesia that is 2003-2004. The quad was here. What was it created for? To look at giving resilience and giving and dealing with non-traditional threats of climate change. It got a flip in 2009 when Hillary Clinton and Obama came down and spoke here, and that was to give their condition of getting the first start of collaborative security really. But more importantly, to have a finger in the pipe with the geo-economics that shifted to Asia Pacific. So, I don't think so. Anything that happened with Quad today as a security architecture is wrongly perceived. What it did was and which it is now addressing, is that there are three ways that you look at deterrence. Deterrence by punishment, deterrence by denial. Deterrence by denial was the strategy which China adopted

while they had a symmetry with the US in the naval part; it takes the anti-axes anti-denial strategy. What it moved it up ahead get closer to the first line of a specific line of islands: the first chain, the second chain, and don't let them come close enough. So, the collaborative security structures or the bilateral security structures with Japan, Taiwan, and all could not be executed. So, that was a denial. Where are all this Quad looking at? We're talking about what in the world needs today is deterrence by resilience, and how is that resilience created? This is where the roles of minilaterals multilaterals capability aggregation linkages will come into play. The military structure is the last; it's an element which is a fallout of thing which is in the perception of mind of people and how do they view it? I look at a half glass empty or a half glass full—that's how you want to see a partnership, whether it's a military alliance or not. All these exercises that were happening here—the bilateral, trilateral, the Malabar exercises has started off in 2005, 2007, and 2008 here. They didn't start now, and China's lives were actually around 12–13–14 when it really sorts of became a part, not before that. Before, it was still rising, and today it is assertive. What does China use? Why this denial by resilience? I'm saying, and that's the focus. Why? Because the strength and instrument of Chinese domination and involvement is the geo-economics, his economic part, which I can't sustain, if Bangladesh needs something or a neighbor needs, I can't give it. The US can't give it sitting there to everyone. So, what happens is China is creating that, and we have the problem in Sri Lanka because of that—that dead trap story. The CPEC, 64 billion along the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, has gone far because it hasn't gone anywhere. Are you getting my point? So, he's using that instrument of economics. So, how do I tackle that? And that's where this resilience issue comes in: denial by resilience, and this denial by resilience is accord, which is a partnership looking at lines of operation. Post-Covid got accentuated. We realize we need self-reliance. India calls it at but self-reliance is critical issues. That's what all nations are

doing now. Otherwise, you're making smaller groupings, which are economic groupings which are linked towards looking at non-traditional threads, and this part of Asia is ridden with climatic issues. We are, I think, the most effective part of Eurasian, the micro-Pacific Ocean continent, and our part of the world is. Vietnam and Bangladesh are the two largest states which are going to get impacted because of climate change. And their Mujib plan and their Delta plan are fantastic. The resilience towards and mitigation strategy to climate change is being led by Bangladesh in a very very major manner. So, I think we have to understand these. All these issues have to be tackled, and today, when I look at it, collaborative security is the answer. Security qualification is not only just military but all across the spectrum. The second thing is this capability aggregation. When I look at capability aggregation, the political and economic integration is an answer of the cord. This is a technological capability enhancement that you're seeing. So, when we look at all these pillars, this is where resilience is coming in, and that's the path to go ahead. The military is a very small element. It's like, I mean, I pay insurance for all my life, and I don't want to go to the hospital. Yeah, I pay insurance for the military because I don't want to go to war. I don't give it. It's an insurance policy. So, you must have might is required because as, say, an iron fist in a velvet glove. A velvet glove has to be the resilience. The Iron Fist has to be that. There should be an apparent sure part because China looks at two things. It's a power-hierarchical system of dealing. If I am strong and you are weak and then we have a collaboration. The resultant answer is if the weak gives in, not the strong gives in anything. Are you getting my point? So, today you have to have the right, which is the show of collaboration and aggregation of your capability, and the other is to have resilience. So, your dependence on them gets to be removed. So, that's how I look at it, and I would say that's the path that we should look around and that's why India says we're not in any alliance. We are part of partnerships—partnerships for everything. We have a great partnership

with Bangladesh. I think today the stability in the two countries has never seen this. The golden era of relationships between the two of us. Our trade in the last 5 years has grown by about six times, over 16 billion from 6 billion. It's phenomenal! Thank you very much. Sorry! I mean, this is, as I said, an exciting subject to go on."

Bec Strating, "Yeah, no, no, no. That was a wonderful answer, but we might turn. We've got about 15 minutes for Q&A. So, I see there's a question at the back and at the front. Sorry! Would you like to step up to the microphone and anybody else who has a question? Please feel free to. Yep! Step up and head to the microphone. I'll take three questions, and then I'll present them to the panel if that's okay." "Okay yeah".

Question One, "That's okay, yeah. So, I agree silence is naming a very interesting, lively, and very based on this realism, which is quite good. I would like to go into things a bit more and then asks something provocative. So, I mean, okay, you're talking about the role how geo-economics supports geopolitics, and this is absolutely true, and it's quite often represented in constructs. Today, as it was previously, I mean the Japanese-East Asian co-prosperity as a historical example. The Del Road initiative is a contemporary one, and this gives some kind of signal of intention and geo-strategy. So that's on that side, but one thing that has been kind of ignored here is the geo-strategy of the US. Especially within the context, it's a declining hon, and it doesn't want to; it's trying to claim it back. This is something the Biden administration made clear, and that was one of their election promises. And if we look at that, what is the US geo-strategy? Well, I mean, this is boiling down to what Brinsky said in 1997: the three geo-strategic imperatives to keep the vessel states dependent and obedient (if you want to call it that client states protected and obedient) and

to prevent any rise of competing powers or groups of powers. So, the Belt Road initiative is a big red flag for them. But I mean, from what I hear from here, I mean you're quite often talking about this measure of activity as the main point, throwing more men throw this that more equipment, but I mean you've also got the measure of effectiveness of what you put in there, and you've got these intangibles, and after Afghanistan, US credibility took a good hit, and when you have a hegemon doing something like that, others are going to feel that vacuum and coming into the point, I mean, you come to the point I mean in this region historically has been an object of external great power interests and competition. Now you have this geopolitical transformation, and you stand at a point where you can be either an object or the subject of an event. So, I mean, for all three of you, I mean because the US, frankly, as the British Empire was before, is a maritime power, as is Japan, primarily. What you're trying to go against if we cut the bill is to go against a continental power, a substantial one. So, I mean, we see how that happens: Iraq against Iran, now to come to the point, okay. What are the main threats and weaknesses you see for the local actors here to retain their autonomy and to be a subject rather than an object of things as they unfold?"

Bec Strating, "Okay, thank you very much. Look, we don't actually have as much time. "Yeah, question." Look, I'm sorry. We've actually been told that we need to wrap this up, and we've only got four minutes to go. You can ask a question, thank you, but keep it very brief. Thank you."

Question two, "Thank you, moderator, for the opportunity. My question is: NATO? My name is Mohsin, and I work for 'Daily Samakal'. I am a journalist. So, my question is, I mean, as you know, NATO is not against RASA, as we as the NATO member always claim, so RASA takes it as in their against. So similarly, Quad is saying they are not here to counter China, but China claims

they're countering China. So, my question is: whom to believe? Because China is denying and the Quad is denying, whom to believe? What is the solution over here? Thank you.”

Bec Strating, “Thank you. We've got one minute each. So, would you like to start?”

Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, “Both the questions, you know, frankly speaking, I myself and most of us in South Asia and also in Bangladesh, we do not want to be the subject or object of any big power rivalry. Because we have seen for thousands of years that this Indian subcontinent has been invaded from outside and the invaders have always won, and the last one was from the British and who came very close to, you know, in Kolkata, which is very close to the part of Bengal, and we allowed them to come in, and then we have seen the result of 200 years of colonialism. So, my own view is that we should stay neutral should not get involved in any power struggle of this nature. Let them fight it out. But we must trade our paths very carefully so that, as I said, the economic benefits and, you know, peaceful means of cooperation are okay with Bangladesh. But we must not and should not get into any sort of alliance of military nature; but an alliance of economic alliance is all first class.”

Bec Strating, “Wonderful, thank you. Arun?”

Arun K Sahni, “Yeah, I think you asked a very clear question. I think there's a trust deficit as far as US is concerned, got aggravated after Afghanistan; nobody wants to fall into his prey, and I think today the only way you can go is what India is talking about. It is inclusive development within the nation and within South Asia that's the I mean that's the whole story we are doing. South Asia is together; if it's a fist, nobody can break us. But if tomorrow you have fingers, everybody will take advantage. So that's the aim of the policy of the government, and that's how it's helping

us. And the second thing is, look at self-reliance. Develop lines of operations and economic linkages within the nation. Why should it take me? It's cheaper for me to carry goods to Germany than to bring it into Bangladesh or the other way around. Because infrastructure is shortened, that's should what we were talking about there. So, I think this creates awareness is coming into the nations here between Nepal, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh that, guys, we need to be on our own and our strength is us. What he's talking about numbers, and that's how the greater cooperation within the nation-states of South Asia is the way forward, and that's what is happening now. So, stability is the answer, and that's what each of us looks at. If you have political stability, you will grow big. So, I think strategic autonomy has to be exercised only if you're self-reliant and you are competent enough to be able to survive the hazards, like Russia has survived irrespective of wealth. Who believes America that buys uranium from Russia still and pays them in dollars and tells you don't buy anything? Germany buys oil from there and says you don't buy oil. I mean, what nonsense is this? Yeah, so we are no longer living in that world where you can say something and accept it. So, you now need to change. Walk the talk, baby, and then we'll talk with you. So, strategic autonomy is required for this region. Self-reliant, get your act together in regional alliances and regional groupings. And that is what we are working on, and the last bit, which I would say is, I think there is a need for the West to start looking at the fact that the world has changed. So, please reconfigure the institutions of rulemaking bodies. Otherwise, the revisionist power of China will use some other means which it has used, as we've seen it in COVID time. How did the World Health Organization (WHO) become a lackey of the whole economic part of that? Please change the organization and international organ to be more inclusive of the voice of the global south and the people like us, who are the middle powers, who will make a difference for the future emerging order. Thank you!"

Bec Strating, “And the final word, Satoru.”

Satoru Nagao, “Thank you very much. The Hudson Institute is US a trunk. So, I need to say about the United States about to be from Japan. When we check the history of the United States over the last 250 years, they have changed from just a colonial British Empire to the one superpower in the world, and during the process all of the rival was defeated, and we cannot find these rivals like Germany, Japan empire, or Soviet Union.“ So, due from these situations, I cannot expect the US will allow to China to be the rival in the future. So, in this means that yes, it will be the Cold War, or it will be the war I don't know exactly to remarks. Anyway, if China survives this competition, it will be the first miracle last 250 years. I cannot expect that. Thank you!”

Bec Strating, “Thank you for being brief, and thank you to all of our questions and our panelists. I'm afraid that that is all that we have time for, and I think that we're about to get sent off the stage.