Indo-Israel Strategic Partnership in Indian Ocean and Outer Space: A Need for Regional Counter-Balancing Approach

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Abstract
Indian space exploration has entered a new phase with the formation of the Indian Defence Space Agency (DSA) in 2018 and the procurement of anti-satellite capabilities in 2019. These two incentives prompted India to join the US, Russia, and China in militarizing outer space. Similarly, Israel conducted an ASAT test of the Arrow-3 missile interceptor aimed at the exo-atmosphere. While both India and Israel have described their outer space ambitions as removing debris from the lower orbit, the constant use of their military arsenals demonstrates their shared goal of obtaining the upper hand over their respective rivals, Pakistan, China, and Iran. Prospects for their partnership in outer space are highly contingent on their cooperation in other defence domains, especially maritime security. For India, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is of utmost importance due to China's growing presence, whereas for Israel, the IOR represents a vital trade route that may be at risk due to the development of ports in Pakistan (Gwadar) and Iran (Chahbahar), through which these nations could acquire the means to expand their naval presence. Hence, space collaboration between India and Israel, especially in oceanic geo-sensing, is boosted by their mutual interests in space and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This paper evaluates how Pakistan, Iran, and China could form a trilateral alliance to counter the emerging US-supported Indo-Israeli nexus in IOR and outer space.

Keywords
Indo-Israel, space militarization, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Space Silk Road, Pak-Iran Cooperation, APSCO

Introduction
Considering the ever-evolving nature of warfare, the focus of which has shifted from traditional to non-traditional approaches, various new spheres of confrontation have

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emerged over time. Proxy warfare, cyber-attacks, and growing military footprints in outer space are the few yet prominent arenas that are shaping the future of any armed conflict. While detailed studies have been conducted on proxy warfare and cyber security, the concern over the militarization of outer space is less explored. It is not to neglect any development made in the international arena over the utilization of outer space for military purposes. In December 1966, the UN presented the treaty for the peaceful usage of outer space and other celestial bodies. *Article IV* of this treaty specifically prohibits installing nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) into space, preventing space militarization (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, 1966).

Yet, as the emerging multipolarity gains momentum, many aspiring states are aiming for an increased role in the economic, political, and military affairs of the world. In this sense, the renewed competition amongst the powerful states also instilled the concept of using outer space as a symbol of a state's strength and supremacy in the international system. With this regard, space has transformed it from just being a focused arena of global powers, i.e., the US, Russia, China, and EU, to an ambitious destination for various regional players as well. In light of this, India, from South Asia, and Israel, from the Middle East, are the two aspiring states focused on positioning themselves in the space for their respective security interests.

Indo-Israel space collaboration is an extension of the Indo-Israel defence partnership, which has been consolidating for the past three decades. The Indo-Israel defence partnership is mutually beneficial owing to two key aspects: The diversification of arms supplies that India obtained through Israel. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was the major supplier to the Indian defence industry, India required alternative markets from which it could compensate for its defence needs. Israel's sophistication in military equipment is well recognized, so it became the obvious choice for Indian defence purchases after Russia. (Schaffer, 2009) For Israel, supplying arms to India complements its military-industrial complex. Since 1948, Israel's persistent concern for its security and survival has been met with the solution of continuously upgrading the military-industrial sector. Therefore, resources have been poured in to make MIC self-sufficient through high-tech innovation and sales (Adamsky, 2018). Given India's heavy dependence on arms imports, Israel gets commercial profits by selling the arms to the former mentioned state. In this regard, Israel only managed to supply $715 million worth of arms to India in 2017 (Pant & Sahu, 2019).

More pertinently, the issue of Indo-Israel collaboration is linked with the emerging competition in the Indo-Pacific region, which encompasses both the eastern and western Indian Oceans. Space technology with military aspects entails cutting-edge features primarily used for installing missiles and conducting espionage. In light of this, this paper highlights the growing collaboration between India and Israel in these sectors and, subsequently, analyses the threats and challenges that both Pakistan and Iran could face. The paper will address two principle questions: How will India and Israel cooperate militarily in the maritime and space domains? And what are the alternative possibilities for Pakistan to counter the growing Indo-Israel nexus? To further understand the dimensions of the Indo-Israel strategic partnership, the paper follows a chronological order where, first, the history of the space programs of India and Israel is taken into account, along with their similarities and cooperation in IOR. Finally, the paper investigates the possibilities of collaboration for both Pakistan and Iran to counterbalance the emerging Indo-Israel nexus.

Conceptual Framework

Outer space can be considered the natural arena where no single state can exercise its authority. It is a common environment where state actors coordinate their mechanisms and share their resources. To maintain the natural integrity of outer space, the international system has established certain regimes to avoid future chaos, disruption of power, and potential conflicts. International regimes are the bodies that set out rules and principles of governance and interaction through which power is dispersed amongst different actors like states, global institutions, and multinational organizations (Verbeek, 2011; Moltz, 2019).

Therefore, regimes are labelled as the institutions (formal or informal) that assist in cooperation between the states in the wake of international anarchy. Regimes are generally established when multiple state actors work towards a common goal. Consequently, the need for international regimes becomes inevitable to avoid contradiction and to encourage interdependence in an organized manner. This is not to say that states cooperate out of morality; instead, self-interest and power variables occupy the central stage in states' policies towards joining any international regime. As a result, states enter into international regimes only when their gains outweigh the cost. Further, it is important to note that international regimes ensure the interests of states are not necessarily conflicted but can be achieved through cooperation as well. Hence, the broader regime theory in this regard falls under liberal institutionalism.

However, scholars have argued that, when relating liberal institutionalism to power, international institutions are merely tools that the hegemon uses to assert its authority and are, therefore, vulnerable to manipulation by the great powers. It could further be elaborated by analyzing the functioning of the UN during the Cold War. At that time, the decision-making process of the UN was hindered mainly by the vetoes exercised by the US and USSR for their respective interests. Therefore, Gale subscribed to the notion of 'institutionalized hegemony' through international regimes (Gale, 1998). According to his analysis, there are two types of states: those that subscribe to the hegemonic notion and those that break out of the regime and establish alternative mechanisms. In this article, both types of states are discussed.

During the Cold War, the UN established the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPOUS) under the Office for Outer Space Affairs to address the peaceful usage of outer space. Since the fear of a space race had been gaining pace and the nuclear arsenals of both the US and USSR were increasing, it was in the interest of both global powers to enter into such an international regime to avoid the escalation of global competition. However, given the decline of the Soviet Union's power and eventually its dismemberment in 1991, the US entirely dominated the space dimension to the extent that numerous issues and challenges started to emerge regarding the interpretation of 'peaceful purposes'. As US space technology advanced, the fear of its dual usage, i.e., military and civilian, gained momentum. Hence, instead of making outer space a 'non-military' arena, the US prompted the 'non-aggressive' notion, which was duly disagreed with by Russia (Lee & Steele, 2014).

Furthermore, while avoiding violating COPOUS rules, the US also attained the 'property rights' of 'extracted minerals' taken from the lunar surface through its Artemis Program without directly claiming sovereignty over them (Looper, 2022). Russia perceived these steps the US took as strengthening its dominance in outer space through institutional mechanisms.

As mentioned earlier in the context of regime theory, while the US extracts benefits from the space regime setup, Russia and now China consider it to be a US-dominant system and hence seek alternative mechanisms to counter-dominate the US in outer space. Due to this global space competition, the implications at the regional level are inevitable. Since both Israel and India share strong defence partnerships with the US and given India's pivotal position in the US overall strategy of dominating China, these states also benefit from the space regime system.

Regional rivalries are inevitable, considering the global space competition at the regional level. For example, Israel's military space capabilities threaten Iran, while Indian military space ambitions put Pakistan in a security dilemma. In addition to this, since India and Israel take leverage from their association with the US and, therefore, avoid the implications of violations owing to the dominance of the US in the space regime, this paper highlights how Pakistan and Iran could also manage to overcome their security dilemmas by seeking an alternative mechanism by utilizing their respective partnerships with China.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis considered in this study emphasizes that both India and Israel aim to strengthen themselves in their respective regions with the support of the US. Since Israeli military technology complements India's defence needs, the emerging Indo-Israel nexus becomes a natural phenomenon. For Pakistan, cooperation with China and Iran is imperative in the space and maritime domains since Israel is the arch-rival of Iran, while Indian maritime and space modernization is to counterbalance China.

Research Methodology

The paper makes use of a qualitative approach empirically. The qualitative methodology provides an avenue for understanding the underlying causes and factors of the Indo-Israel strategic partnership and its implications in different sectors, including the Indian Ocean and outer space. It further highlights the space race and the overall dynamic forces that impact the relations between the subject countries: India, Israel, China, and Pakistan. Additionally, explanatory and descriptive methodologies and an exploratory approach are utilized to elaborate the Indo-Israel strategic partnership case study and identify plausible solutions for Pakistan in association with its growing issues in the space and maritime sectors. To identify these factors, within the qualitative approach, case study mechanisms are also induced by using the longitudinal typology through observation and subsequent analysis.

Development of the Indian Military Space Program

The space sector evolved in the context of the Cold War rivalry and transformed into a rigorous space race between the US and the erstwhile USSR. Once the rivalry ended after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, many medium powers, like the EU and China, ambitiously pursued their space programs. Similarly, the Indian space program started in the early 1960s to acquire cutting-edge technologies to ensure India's participation in the 'global exclusive political club' (Rajagopalan, 2019). The three main tasks of the Indian space program fell under the domains of (a) satellite channels, television broadcasting, and weather news; (b) remote sensing and earth observation; and (c) developing the capacity for launching payloads in orbit through the development of multiple satellite launch vehicles.

All three of these programs were spearheaded in the 1980s, with subsequent developments in succeeding decades; however, they remained limited to the earth's

lower and geostationary orbits. Nevertheless, with the inception of the new century, the Indian space program under the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) expanded its scope to include space exploration. In this way, India launched its first moon mission in 2008 and its first Mars mission in 2013. Indian-launched satellites in both of these missions completed their orbits around them. However, the outcome of these missions was less tangible in terms of scientific development; instead, the primary aim of these missions was to project India's technological advancement in outer space. Through both these phases of the Indian space program, i.e., the 1980s and 2000s, the analysis that can be drawn is relevant to the global developments in space and India's desire to keep pace with space progress.

Furthermore, it is important to note that China is a major factor in boosting Indian space ambitions. China made substantial gains in the space sector as a next-door neighbour after establishing its own space agency, named the 'China National Space Administration', in 1993. Since then, China embarked on its lunar mission in 2004 and its Mars mission in 2011. Due to the geopolitical rift, the 'Chinese factor' played a vital role in India's space ambitions. Henceforth, the recent tilt of India towards space militarization must be contextualized in the aforementioned two aspects, i.e., the global trend and the impact of China (mentioned here as the 'Chinese factor').

Globally, two major powers, the US and Russia, are contributing to the militarization of space. The former President of the US, Barack Obama, directed $5 billion for 'space protection capabilities, while the 2020 US Defense Space Strategy labelled Russia and China as the biggest threats to the US in outer space (Defense Space Strategy Summary, 2020). In response, Russia restarted its GLONASS GPS in the early 2000s and merged the space program with the military air force in 2015 (Mortz, 2019). Finally, Russia also conducted the anti-satellite test in 2021, reasserting its space militarization. Given the US-Russia space competition, Chinese military ambitions in space also developed, especially after 2015, when, for the first time, space was considered a military domain in China's defense white paper (Weeden, 2020). China also acquired anti-satellite testing (ASAT) capabilities in 2007, and through its rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO), its demonstration of space awareness and inspection of co-orbital ASAT testing is evident.

Traditionally, India opposed the militarization of space during the Cold War because of its non-aligned policy and the quest to acquire commercial gains using space technology. For these purposes, militarization support would negatively impact India's position vis-à-vis the geostrategic environment and economic progress. However, as the global trend shifted towards militarizing space and the threat perception from Pakistan's ballistic missiles and Chinese ASAT technology increased, India shifted from its traditional position to become a leading state in space militarization.

In 2008, India established an Integrated Space Cell within the Ministry of Defense to align the space policy with that military objective. More concretely, India established two new organizations in 2019: the Defense Space Research Agency (DSRA) and the Defense Space Agency (DSA). The first one is tasked with working similarly to that of ISRO and conducting research on utilizing civilian space assets for military purposes. The second one, however, is directly linked with the military command and would be transformed into a separate 'Aerospace Command' in synchronization with the land, air, and naval commands (Giri, 2021). Therefore, what was initiated as a space exploration program gradually transformed into a space

militarization program of India, which, through the projection of advanced technology, has moved further to demonstrate India's emerging great power status in the world.

Development of the Israeli Military Space Program

Unlike India, Israel's space program has always focused on security; in fact, it plays a vital role in Israel's security policy. Being surrounded by hostile states, Israel's motivation is to advance its technology to ensure two things: maintain its Qualitative Military Edge (QME) vis-à-vis its neighbours and use satellite technology for surveillance against its enemies, mainly Egypt (Paikowsky et al., 2015). However, although the initial focus of Israel's space program was centered on the security domain, in the 1990s, Israel, like other medium powers, commercialized its space program. For this, Israel became the service provider for satellite telecommunications, networks, and satellite imagery. Despite vying for commercial and market-driven programs, Israel's space budget is closely associated with its Ministry of Defense and Israel's Aerospace Industries (IAI), evidently reflecting the predominance of military aspects in space policy (Bryce Space and Technology, 2017).

The pivotal reason for Israel going into space is its strategic depth. Israel's ability to thwart any external threat is limited as a small country with a smaller landmass. This is the same reason why Israel has focused on expanding and occupying adjacent territories, i.e., the Golan Heights of Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Sinai Peninsula, in the past, to use them as buffer zones. However, to diffuse the threat, acquiring the latest technology that could surpass the geographical contiguity and help conduct preemptive strikes is essential. Outer space provides that arena for Israel to acquire its desired strategic depth.

The procurement of laser technology and high-resolution imagining technologies to be aware of any hostile military plot and spy over the defense and military installations of the enemy is also associated with the acquisition of strategic depth. For this, Israel launched the OFEK-16 satellite in 2020 to complete the constellation of its observatory satellite network, which also included OFEK-11, OFEK-5, Eros A and B, and Amos communication satellites. The striking aspect is the transfer of operation control of these satellites from the Ministry of Defense to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which validates both the aforementioned points of technological superiority and intelligence gathering for military purposes. Hence, like India, Israel has now actively embarked upon the concept of military space usage for its regional gains.

Indo-Israel Prospective Collaboration in Space

Both the Indian and Israeli space programs complement each other in a variety of ways. First, both programs were initiated in the context of regional and global trends deemed essential to secure the respective advantages of both countries, such that Indian concerns about China and Israel's apprehensions about the hostile neighborhood provided the momentum for their space programs. Second, the indigenization of their space programs also provides an arena for mutual collaboration. Israel manufactures high-tech satellites and specializes in developing micro-satellites weighing 300-400 kilograms (Ben-Israel & Kaplan, 2008). Similarly, Indian space vehicles' launching capabilities are advanced, through which India seeks international space cooperation and has already launched the satellites of 20 nations

(Mukherjee, 2018). Third, both states' space programs are mainly based on geo-sensing and high-resolution imaging capabilities.

By having similar ambitions, space data sharing is another phenomenon through which both these countries can establish a cooperative mechanism. Fourth, ISRO and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) signed the 'Plan of Cooperation on Atomic Clocks' in 2017 to jointly venture into space exploration. Previously, Israel had also helped India develop the RISAT-II imaging satellite, while India assisted Israel in launching the TESCAR surveillance satellite.

Finally, transforming civilian space programs into military space programs, i.e., establishing DSA in India and transferring space satellites to the IDF in Israel, also converge their mutual interests in weaponizing space. Collaboration in the space defense sector has already occurred with the transfer of Green Pine Radar from Israel to India, which boosted India's Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and eventually assisted it in acquiring ASAT capabilities (Joshi, 2019).

Implications for IOR

IOR is an arena of growing convergence as well as concern for both India and Israel. India is regarded as a pivotal actor in the IOR; meanwhile, a significant amount of Israeli trade also passes through this region. For that reason, India considers the growing Chinese presence in IOR a major threat to its interests, while the development of ports in both Pakistan (Gwadar) and Iran (Chahbahar) will also increase their respective maritime presence, which poses a threat to Israel (Bag, 2020). Furthermore, India and Israel aim to counter the nexus of Pakistan, China, and Iran by having strong footprints in IOR. Therefore, their collaboration in IOR and their own policymaking circles is deemed important, and space technology plays a pivotal role.

Since both India and Israel are keen on optical satellites, their operational scope within the IOR would be expanded. This way, detecting adversarial naval assets would be accessible to both states. Furthermore, any economic development along the coastal line, specifically in the context of Pakistan and Iran, would be within reach of India and Israel, respectively. Furthermore, Synthetic Aperture Radar Satellites (SARsats) and ASAT technology would be detrimental to maintaining the status quo within IOR.

In the specific context of Pakistan and Iran, both states have successfully and sophisticatedly developed their respective missile programs. The A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) strategy could also be affected by Pakistan's naval modernization strategy. The essential elements of the A2/AD strategy are the anti-ship and cruise missiles, warships, and attack submarines that Pakistan has already inducted into its naval fleet. By upgrading its naval assets, Pakistan has gradually transformed its maritime security policy from defensive to offensive defence to create a buffer zone (Ali, 2021). However, with the Indian acquisition of high-tech imaging satellites, its preemptive capability in operational capacity would be enhanced vis-à-vis Pakistan's naval defense.

On the other hand, in the case of Iran-Israel rivalry in the IOR, it is imperative to understand their mutual maritime hostility in the larger context. Since 2019, Israel has frequently targeted Iranian vessels in the Mediterranean and Red Sea that supposedly carried ammunition and oil to Syria. In response, Iran started to target naval vessels with ties to Israel in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman (Nadimi, 2021). Therefore, Israeli interests and ambition to reach the Indian Ocean are only natural,

and space technology would better provide security and navigation to Israeli-linked vessels. Simultaneously, Iran also launched its military satellite into space, named 'Noor-1', in 2020 and its upgraded version, 'Noor-2', in March 2022. The military component of the Iranian space program has given Iran an intelligence advantage and favored its geopolitical position. As with India and Israel, the Iranian launch of a satellite was conducted by the IRGC Aerospace Force, signaling yet another actor in the race for space militarization. Therefore, where Indo-Pak competition in IOR is speculated to disrupt the power balance, the inception of Israel-Iran competition in the new arena of IOR using space technology would further fuel the competition and affect the peace of IOR.

Emerging Scenarios and a Way Forward

The states are shifting towards high-tech assets in artificial intelligence, cyberspace, and outer space to project and exercise their power and dominance. As elaborated earlier in this paper, great powers (the US, Russia, and China) are competing to attain dominance in outer space, which has also provoked medium powers to participate in the emerging space order. The space programs of India, Iran, and Israel are testimonies to their inclination to expand the scope of their competition. Furthermore, the security concept has also transformed from a land-based to a maritime domain. In this context, the Chinese 'string of pearls' strategy, the US Quad and AUKUS strategies in the Indo-Pacific, and Russia's Arctic Strategy 2035 reflect the growing importance of higher seas.

In this context, Indo-Israeli space collaboration, specifically referencing IOR, is expected to bring two dynamic forces to the region. First, the participation of great powers in this geopolitical competition is likely. Since the Indian space program is a response to establishing the Chinese space program, Sino-Indian competition would intensify further.

Moreover, as the US is already spearheading the Quad Alliance, its involvement in this regard would be inevitable. One notable development that has the potential to happen is the merging of the Indo-Pacific Quad with that of the Middle Eastern Quad, named I2U2, the alliance that includes the US, India, Israel, and the UAE, through the emergence of Israel in the IOR. Second, the disturbance of peace in IOR through the possible attacks on cargo ships and the navigation of Indian and Israeli naval assets in that region. If this happens, the states that would be on the receiving end would be China, Pakistan, and Iran. Chinese stakes in IOR are immense owing to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in which the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is a vital and probably the most crucial segment.

Similarly linked to it are the developments of ports in Pakistan and Iran through Chinese assistance. These ports are expected to play a significant role in the economic growth of these countries. Therefore, any military adventure in IOR would ultimately be consequential for the interests of these three states. Hence, there could be three possible choices to counter and diffuse the threat of the Indo-Israeli nexus.

Reiterating the Space Governance Laws

The reiteration of the commitment to prevent the use of space for military purposes, as mentioned in various UN resolutions and proposals, could be emphasized. As the introduction notes, the UN explicitly prohibits the 'ownership' of space and its military usage. While specifically mentioning the use of nuclear power sources and reactors, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 1992 only to allow

nuclear technology in cases of utmost necessity while keeping the radioactive hazard levels below the limit in case of an accident in the future (Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, n.d.). Furthermore, Article XIII of the remote sensing resolution passed in the UN General Assembly in 1986 specifically highlighted and proposed cooperation between the state that is conducting remote sensing and the state whose territory is being sensed to promote inclusiveness and eradicate discrepancies (Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space, n.d.). Such laws could be reinforced through multilateral mechanisms to thwart the growing militarization of space. It is also significant for continued cooperation on the International Space Station (ISS).

Regional or global powers' militarisation of space would jeopardize space research for peaceful purposes. Still, given the inability of the UN to intervene in great power competition, this approach is less likely to yield fruitful results, partly because of the renewed space race that has unfolded in the emerging global structure of multipolarity. A prime example of this is the statement by Russia about quitting the ISS after 2024 (Carbonaro, 2022). China is already operating its own Tiangong Space Station (TSS) independently of the ISS. Given these dynamics, a clear divide in space would be inevitable, which could lead to space confrontation by bypassing UN space laws.

Trilateral Cooperation in Space: APSCO and SSR

The cooperation between Pakistan and China in space is not new. Pakistan launched its first satellite in 1990 with Chinese assistance, and both countries had also signed a 2012–2020 roadmap for space cooperation (Amaresh, 2020). In 2017, Pakistan also signed an agreement to replace its reliance on the UN navigation system with the Chinese *Beidou* navigation system (Mohan & Hao, 2018). Similarly, the cooperation between Iran and China in space mainly started in the late 1990s. In 1998, Iran signed agreements with both Russia and China to jointly develop a series of satellites and rockets (Krzyzaniak, 2022). Likewise 2015, Iran's electronics firm Salran signed an agreement with Chinese firms to initiate navigation operations using the Chinese Beidou system (Segev, 2021).

Apart from their respective bilateral space cooperation with China, both Pakistan and Iran are also members of the Chinese-led Asia-Pacific Space Research Organization (APSCO). ASPCO allows the member states to share space data, organize training and conventions related to space, and collaborate on mutual space objectives like space exploration, space technology, communications, and navigation. In fact, through APSCO, China has provided both Pakistan and Iran, along with Peru, with 15-cm telescopes to keep track of objects in lower earth orbit and geostationary orbits (Guo et al., 2020). In its Development Vision 2030, APSCO laid out the principles of mutual cooperation in space sciences, technology, human resources, finance, data sharing, and mutually developing Small Multi-Mission Satellites (SMMSs) and an earth observatory known as APOSOS II (Development Vision 2030 of the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization, 2018). From these types of cooperation, both Pakistan and Iran, the emerging states in the space domain, could benefit a lot in terms of resilience against the space assertiveness of their respective adversaries, i.e., India and Israel. Cooperation with China in space is also viable in the context of China's 'Space Silk Road'. At the core of it is the previously mentioned *Beidou* Satellite Navigation System, which is a satellite constellation over Asia and Europe aiming to achieve 'millimeter-level accuracy' in terms of surveillance,

navigation, and positioning (China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, 2016). Such a system would yield two advantages for China, Pakistan, and Iran. First, it would be an alternative to the US Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). Second, for Pakistan and Iran, the surveillance would help both countries thwart the threats posed by India and Israel. As India contests the development of Gwadar port in Pakistan and Israel is expanding its operational scope into IOR, the security of both Gwadar and Chahbahar is a priority matter for Pakistan and Iran, respectively, as these ports would serve as the lifeline for their respective economies. It has significance for China, too, since Gwadar is the streamlined project for CPEC (one of the six corridors of China's BRI), while in Chahbahar, China has investments as part of a $400 billion deal with Iran. Therefore, accessing the *Beidou* system and collaborating with China would allow these states to counter the Indo-Israeli nexus in the IOR.

Conclusion

Space militarization has recently gained significant importance since the end of the Cold War. This prominence can be attributed to the developing of new security domains related to emerging technologies and non-traditional security threats. One major aspect that differentiates the militarization of space during the Cold War from the current one is the change in the global structure. As new aspiring states have emerged owing to multipolarity, global competition is no longer limited to great powers or states. As prominent states in their respective regions, India and Israel are aspirants to exploit maximum benefits from their alliance with the US. The partnership between India and Israel further consolidated itself after the official establishment of the multilateral US-led coalition, i.e., I2U2. The only odd inclusion in this alliance was India since India does not share any similarities with the Middle East's political, strategic, and defense dynamics.

However, the inclusion of India by the US clearly indicates the US desire to utilize India's economic potential to counterbalance China's BRI project. Apart from China, I2U2 also holds lateral implications for other states, i.e., Pakistan and Iran. For Iran, Israel's participation in the regional alliance testifies to its legitimacy in the region and would allow Israel to expand its political footprint and military scope. In such circumstances, Iranian security could have adverse effects. For Pakistan, India's encroachment in the Middle East diminishes Pakistan's traditional role in the region, i.e., its legacy through the Baghdad Pact, Arab-Israel Wars, and economic and military cooperation with the Gulf States.

Therefore, I2U2 allows both Israel and India to enhance their cooperation in the military domain, especially in the maritime sector. The reciprocal arrangement could also materialize, allowing Israel's presence in the Indian Ocean, particularly after the attacks on Israel's flag-bearer ships in the Persian Gulf. As discussed in the paper, any maritime-related activity hugely depends on space technology for navigation. This further provides avenues for both Israel and India to take their mutual collaboration into outer space. Considering the threats posed by the military space developments of both China and Iran, the space aspirations of both India and Israel, respectively, could be regarded as an ever-growing phenomenon. Under all these circumstances, Pakistan is the only country lacking maritime and space sectors. Pakistan's navy could be considered a resource-constrained force compared with India's naval technology, including an aircraft carrier, among other arsenals. Regarding space technology, Pakistan's space sector is also largely underdeveloped.

Given Pakistan's historical animosity with India and the steadfast policy of not recognizing Israel, the Indo-Israel nexus in the Indian Ocean and outer space would affect Pakistan the most, particularly in the wake of CPEC, which holds paramount importance for Pakistan.

It is, therefore, recommended that instead of going for bilateral engagements with the rivals, the purposeful solution would be to tackle the nexus jointly. The stakes for both Pakistan and Iran are linked due to their respective ports. Since China has investments in Gwadar and Chahbahar, any disruption in IOR would eventually endanger Chinese investments. Hence, as minilateral alliances are on the rise given I2U2, AUKUS, and QUAD, Pakistan, China, and Iran must also work towards arranging such an alliance. The groundwork has already been laid through APSCO and SSR. BRI, along with its four channels, i.e., the Land Route (traditional Silk Road), the Digital Silk Road, the Maritime Route, and the Space Silk Road, is a perfect platform to counterbalance the Indo-Israel nexus. Further amalgamation could be made by linking ASPCO with the Space Silk Road of the BRI and then navigating the operations of the Maritime Silk Road through ASPCO (or SSR). Since both Pakistan and Iran are members of BRI and both India and Israel, owing to their respective alliances with the US, do not wish to participate in this Chinese venture, a regional approach of offsetting the Indo-Israel nexus through BRI's maritime and space corridors or any other minilateral regional setting featuring China, Pakistan, and Iran is not only imperative but also viable.

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