

CISSS SINCE ITS INCEPTION
Third Edition

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About CISSS

The Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-commercial and multidisciplinary research-oriented organization.

CISSS was established on 1 July 2021. Lt Gen Nadeem Zaki Manj, Director General Strategic Plans Division (DG SPD) inaugurated CISSS on 26 November 2021.

CISSS is committed to conducting rigorous and fact-based research and analysis of contemporary strategic issues including: (i) Nuclear Strategy; (ii) South Asian Strategic Stability; (iii) Peaceful uses of Nuclear and Space Technologies; (iv) Non-Traditional Security Imperatives including Climate Change; (v) Arms Control, Nonproliferation, Disarmament and Export Controls; (vi) Multilateral Organizations; (vii) Security Alliances (NATO, QUAD, AUKUS and CSTO); (viii) Evolving Global and Regional Security Environment; (ix) Hybrid and 5th Generation Warfare; and (x) Emerging Technologies.

CISSS: Concept, Rationale and Objectives

CISSS has been established as a Think Tank to interact with key opinion makers from various walks of life and young scholars in Sindh with a view to developing a better understanding of Pakistan's narrative on regional and global issues of interest to Pakistan.

CISSS will establish positive linkages with academic institutions of higher learning in Sindh. It will sponsor and groom a talent pool of young scholars with a view to presenting Pakistan's strategic narrative through effective writing, talks and wide participation in seminars and conferences.

CISSS intends to host and provide a forum to national and international think tanks, and those involved in Track 1.5/2 dialogues, to engage in meaningful debate on official policies on nuclear and strategic subjects within the ambit of the larger national narrative of Pakistan.

CISSS aims to provide innovative, practical and timely input on national and strategic affairs to decision makers.

CISSS strives to become the go-to think tank for academics and intellectuals in Sindh and beyond.

CISSS provides opportunities to young scholars through research and analysis and fellowship program, essay competitions, virtual courses on nuclear deterrence and other interactive engagements.

Mission Statement

- Developing a better understanding of Pakistan's strategic narrative.
- Promoting strategic stability for peace and security in South Asia and beyond.
- Highlighting Pakistan's achievements in peaceful uses of nuclear and space technologies for sustainable development.

CISSS Activities

In order to achieve its goal of becoming a leading think tank of Pakistan, CISSS is carrying out several activities to promote Pakistan's narrative at national and international levels. Some of those activities include hosting conferences and seminars, guest lecture series, diplomatic segment, outreach program and publications.



Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi
Vice Chancellor
University of Karachi



Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai
NI, III, III (M), (R) Advisor
Development National Command
Authority



Ms Mahtab Akbar Rashdi
former Bureaucrat and Media
Personality



Lt Gen Tariq Waseem Ghazi (R)
former Defence Secretary



Ambassador Mustafa Kamal Kazi (R)
former Ambassador to Russia and
Netherlands



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Dr Shaista Tabassum
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CISSS Advisory Board



Dr Syed Shauqat Ali Shah Jamote
Industrialist, Agriculturist and former Federal
Minister for Agriculture



Prof/Dr Ataur-Rahman
former Chairman IEC and Minister
for Science and Technology



Mr Iqbal Adamjee
Industrialist and Businessman



Brig Zahir Kazmi
Director General Arms Control
and Disarmament Affairs (SPD)



Mr Nusrat Mirza
Chairman Rabita Forum
International (RFI) and
Political Scientist



Mr Anwar Mansoor Khan
former Attorney General
of Pakistan

Composition of Team CISSS

CISSS is headed by Executive Director and has three Directors Research, two Associate Directors Research, ten Research Officers and eight Research Assistants.



Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R)
Executive Director



Air Cdre Zahid Ul Hassan,
SI(M), TI(M)
Director Research



Dr Mohid Iftikhar
Director Research



Aftab Hussain
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Glimpses of CISSS Inauguration Ceremony



CISSS Introductory Workshop

An Introductory Workshop was held at CISSS from 5 July 2021 to 16 July 2021. The Workshop comprised six modules: (i) National Security; (ii) Peaceful Applications of Nuclear and Space Programs (PANSP); (iii) Nuclear Safety, Security and Regulatory Regime (NSSRR); (iv) Strategic Stability and Deterrence (SSD); (v) Non-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament Regime (NACDR); and (vi) Geopolitics. Team CISSS also visited Karachi Nuclear Power Plant-2 (K-2 NPP) on 9 July 2021 as part of the Introductory Workshop.

As part of the Workshop, the following resource persons spoke at CISSS:



AD NCA Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai NI, HI, HI (M), (R), Advisor Development National Command Authority, speaking on Pakistan's nuclear program – A Multi-Dimensional Deterrence Capability for National Security (5 July 2021)



Ambassador Zamir Akram (R) speaking on the International Security Environment and Foreign Policy Determinants for Pakistan (5 July 2021)



Lt Gen Aamer Riaz (R) speaking on National Security Framework: Vision, Vital National Interests and their Pursuit (6 July 2021)



Lt Gen Tariq Waseem Ghazi (R), former Secretary of Defence speaking on National Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of Pakistan – Challenges and Opportunities (6 July 2021)



Maj Gen Faiz Bangash (R) speaking on the Statecraft and Role of Media (6 July 2021)



Dr Syed Shafqat Shah Jamote speaking on National Integration and the Challenges of Inter Provincial and Intra-Provincial Harmony (6 July 2021)



Dr Ansar Parvez, former Chairman PAEC, speaking on Pakistan's Peaceful Nuclear Program for Socio-Economic Development (7 July 2021)



Maj Gen Amer Nadeem, Chairman SUPARCO, speaking on Pakistan's Space Program for Socio-Economic Development (7 July 2021)



Dr Mansoor Ahmed speaking on Nuclear Technology: Radiation, Fission, Fusion and Nuclear Fuel Cycle, Fissionable and Fissile Materials: Global Fissile Materials Stocks Estimates, and Nuclear Weapons (8 July 2021)



Mr Muhammad Rehman, DG PNRA, speaking on Nuclear Safety and Regulatory Mechanism of Pakistan (12 July 2021)



Mr Waseem Azhar, Chief Engineer PAEC, speaking on Case Studies of Major Nuclear Accidents including Fukushima and Chernobyl (12 July 2021)



Brig Zahir Kazmi (R), DG ACDA, speaking on Nuclear Lexicon, Concepts of Strategic Stability and Nuclear Deterrence, Nuclear Order: UN First Committee, CD Geneva, IAEA Vienna and the Concept of BMD (13 July 2021)



Dr Lubna Kidwai speaking on Epistemic Beliefs and Responses to Information and Perspectives in World of Media (13 July 2021)



Dr Nabeel Hayat, former Chairman NESCOM, and Advisor SPD speaking on NESCOM – A State of the Art Strategic Organization and its Multidimensional Capabilities (14 July 2021)



Maj Gen Ausaf Ali (R), Former DG Operations and Plans SPD, speaking on Pakistan-India Crisis Stability and Nuclear Deterrence (14 July 2021)



Brig Imran Hassan, Director ACDA, speaking on the Evolution of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime (15 July 2021)



Col Ayaz Mehmood, Director ACDA, speaking on CWC, OPCW, BTWC and ISU (16 July 2021)



Brig Haroon Rasheed, Director ACDA, speaking on Strategic Export Control Regime and Pakistan-India Conventional and Nuclear Arms Control (16 July 2021)



Air Cdr Waseem Qutub, Director ACDA, speaking on the History of US-Russia Arms Control, Disarmament and the China Factor (16 July 2021)



Captain Dr Aqeel Akhtar (R), Deputy Director ACDA, speaking on Reducing Nuclear Risk (16 July 2021)



Dr Huma Baqai, Associate Professor IBA Karachi, speaking on Indo-US Strategic Partnership: Past, Present and Future (10 January 2022)



Dr Ansar Parvez, Former Chairman PAEC, speaking on Physics and Mechanics of Nuclear Technology and its Applications (2-4 August 2022)

Joint Study Tours

BTTN-CISSS Joint Study Tour

Team Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) visited Karachi on 7-14 November 2021 for joint study tour with the Team CISSS. The study tour program had three components: (i) Strategic Get-to-Know Seminar; (ii) Visit to national facilities; and (iii) Social events.

AD NCA addressed the Strategic Get-to-Know Seminar during which presentations were made by Teams CISSS and BTTN. Dr Lubna Khalid Kidwai delivered a lecture on “What matters in academic writing?”

Visits were organized to national facilities including K-2 NPP, SCF- K Directorate SUPARCO, and Maritime and PAF Museums. The social component included visit to Nathiagali Beach and dining out.



Joint Study Tour North

Teams CISSS and BTTN visited Islamabad on 19-31 March 2022 for Joint Study Tour North (JSTN). They were joined by team members of Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) and Strategic Vision Institute (SVI). The JSTN Program had three components: (i) Joint Strategic Get-to-Know Seminar; (ii) Visits to national facilities and institutions; and (iii) Social and recreational events.

Visits to national facilities and institutions included: (i) NESCOM Centers of Excellence; (ii) PINSTECH/PARR-1/PARR-2; (iii) PIEAS; (iv) IST/SUPARCO Satellite Ground Control Station Rawat; (v) PAC Kamra and AWC; (vi) POF Wah and HIT; (vii) Chashma Nuclear Power Plants; (viii) PCENS Chakri; (ix) PNRA; (x) NDU; (xi) ISSI; and (xii) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Visits were also organized to Pakistan Day Parade, Faisal Mosque, Saidpur Village, Red Zone, Pakistan Monument Shakarparian and Lok Virsa.



CISSS Diplomatic Segment

As part of the Diplomatic Segment, former Ambassadors of Pakistan spoke at CISSS on seven occasions.



Ambassador Naghmana Alamgir Hashmi (R) speaking on Pakistan-China Relations in the Era of Great Power Competition (21 December 2021)



Ambassador Mustafa Kamal Kazi (R) speaking on Pakistan-Russia Relations: Past, Present and Future (28 December 2021)



Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador Najmuddin Shaikh (R) speaking on Expressing Solidarity with the Brutalized People of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) (4 February 2022)



Ambassador Zamir Akram (R) speaking on Global and Regional Geopolitics of Ukraine War (9 May 2022)



Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador Tehmina Janjua (R) and Ambassador Rafiuzzaman Siddiqui (R) speaking at CISSS on the occasion of Kashmir Black Day (27 October 2022)



ED CISS Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi (R) speaking on Pakistan-IAEA cooperation (2 January 2023)



Ambassador Zamir Akram (R) speaking on the Kashmir Issue in the Human Rights Council (8 February 2023)

CISSS Outreach Program

As part of its Outreach Program, Team CISSS has interacted with several universities, think tanks and government organizations.



At DHA Suffa University (20 January 2022)



At IBA main campus Karachi (28 February 2022)



Team CISSS being briefed on AI-based applications at National Centre of Artificial Intelligence (NCAI) (7 March 2022)



At Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tando Jam (30 May 2022)



At Crop2X (Karachi-based AI Company) (30 May 2022)



At Nuclear Institute of Agriculture (NIA) Tando Jam (30 May 2022)



At Hamdard University (21 June 2022)



At Atomic Energy Medical Center Karachi (AEMC) (29 June 2022)



At Nazeer Hussain University (NHU) (23 June 2022)



At Karachi Institute of Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine (KIRAN) (30 June 2022)



At Karachi Council on Foreign Relations (KCFR) (18 July 2022)



At Millennium Institute of Technology and Entrepreneurship (MiTE) (19 July 2022)



At Energy Department, Government of Sindh (20 July 2022)



At Iqra University (20 July 2022)



At Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) (21 July 2022)



At SZABIST (22 July 2022)



At National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) (22 July 2022)



At National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) (28 July 2022)



At Ziauddin University (29 July 2022)



CISSS meeting with Secretary Universities and Boards Sindh (4 August 2022)



CISSS meeting at Forest and Wildlife Department Sindh (4 August 2022)



CISSS meeting at Sindh Higher Education Commission (Sindh HEC) (10 August 2022)



At Agha Khan University (AKU) Karachi (15 August 2022)



At OAK Consulting (Education Consultancy Organization) (17 August 2022)



At Dow University of Health Sciences Karachi (27 August 2022)



Meeting with Secretary Agriculture, Supply & Prices Department Government of Sindh (30 August 2022)



At Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology (FUUAST) (30 August 2022)



At Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) Karachi (31 August 2022)



At Customs House Karachi (31 August 2022)



At Sir Syed University of Engineering Technology (31 August 2022)



At Director General Public Relations (DGPR), Press Information Department (PID) Karachi (11 September 2022)



At Karachi Press Club (KPC) (13 September 2022)



At University of Sindh, Jamshoro (19 September 2022)



At AI Company Tezeract (23 September 2022)



CISSS meeting with Chairman Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA) and Pakistan Steel Mills Dr Saifuddin Junejo (10 October 2022)



CISSS visited Sindh Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (STEVA) (16 February 2023)



At Jinnah University for Women (JUW), Karachi (21 February 2023).



At Salim Habib University (SHU) (27 February 2023)

CISSS Internship Program

Eight students of DHA Suffa University completed Internship Program held at the CISSS from 29 September to 28 October 2022.

At a ceremony held at CISSS to mark the completion of the Program, Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai (R), AD NCA awarded Internship Certificates to DHA Suffa University students Mahnoor Anis, Ahmed Khalid, Muhammad Haroon, Hafsa Afzal, Zainab Noor, Hiba Iman, Mohsin Nadeem and Syeda Mariam Zaidi. He congratulated the students on successful completion of the first CISSS Internship Program and conveyed his best wishes for their future endeavors. Executive Director CISSS Ambassador Qazi Khalilullah (R) and all members of Team CISSS were present on the occasion.

The Internship program at CISSS included reading, research and writing assignments on a host of geopolitical and geo-economic issues. These included global power competition, Jammu and Kashmir dispute, deterrence and strategic stability, rise of Hindutva and its implications on strategic stability in South Asia, arms control, disarmament, nonproliferation, climate change, emerging technologies, connectivity and development and role of nuclear and space technologies in the socio-economic development of the country.



TV Interviews



ED CISSS Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R) sharing his views on Ukraine crisis in the Express News program “The Review” (25 February 2022)



Associate Director Dr Saba Sahar highlighting the significance of Youm-e-Takbeer and peaceful uses of nuclear technology in the Time News Program “Pahenji Morning” (27 May 2022)



Associate Director Dr Saba Sahar speaking on the eve of 14 August in Special Transmission of Dharti TV (14 August 2022)



Associate Director Dr Saba Sahar speaking on Non-Traditional Security Challenges to Pakistan: Climate Change in Sindh TV Morning Show “Salam Sindh” (5 October 2022)



Team CISSS at Talk Show “Inside Pakistan with Muhammad Zafeer” on K21 News (14 August 2022)



CISSS-University of Sindh Joint Conference on Strategic and Economic Dimensions of Pakistan-China Relations amid Deepening Global Geopolitical Divide

A Conference titled “Strategic and Economic Dimensions of Pakistan-China Relations amid Deepening Global Geopolitical Divide” was jointly organized by the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) and the University of Sindh on 21 December 2022. The Conference was held at the University’s Main Campus in Jamshoro.

The Conference Concept Note was presented by Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R), Executive Director CISSS. Presidential Remarks on behalf of the Vice Chancellor of the University were delivered by Professor Dr Rafique Ahmed Memon, Pro Vice Chancellor of Sindh University, Thatta Campus. Vote of Thanks was conveyed by Dr Ishrat Afshan Abbasi, Chairperson Department of International Relations. Dr Asma Shakir Khawaja, Executive Director Center for International Strategic Studies-AJK, delivered concluding remarks.

The following spoke at the Conference: (i) Pakistan’s Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque, spoke on China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations at 71 and Beyond; (ii) Dr Ansar Pervez, former Chairman Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, spoke on China-Pakistan Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and its Role in Sustainable Development of Pakistan; (iii) Professor Dr Hamadullah Kakepoto, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences University of Sindh, spoke on Role of CPEC in Socio-economic Development of Sindh; (iv) Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman Senate Defense Committee and Co-Chairman International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), spoke on Pakistan-China Relations amid Big Power Competition; and (v) Professor Hang Li, President of Software College–Shenyang Normal University, spoke on Pakistan-China Cooperation in Emerging Technologies.



Seminar cum Webinar on Kashmir Solidarity Day



On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, CISSS hosted a seminar cum webinar on 3 February 2023. On the occasion: (i) Dr Asma Shakir Khawaja Executive Director CISS-AJK spoke on “Kashmir between Pakistan and India: What went wrong and why the process was derailed”; (ii) Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R) Executive Director CISSS spoke on the “Key Features of Pakistan’s Kashmir Policy”; (iii) Prof Dr Ahmed Saeed Minhas VC DHA Suffa University spoke on “Implications of the Revocation of Special Status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir by India on 5 August 2019”; and (iv) Dr Shaheen Akhtar spoke on “Disempowerment of Kashmiris under Indian Occupation.”

CISSS Participation in Seminar on Kashmir Issue: Past and Present Organized by Department of International Relations, University of Sindh



Team CISSS comprising Executive Director Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R), Director Research Air Commodore Zahid ul Hasan and Associate Director Research Dr Saba Sahar attended a seminar titled “Kashmir Issue: Past and Present” organized by the Department of International Relations of University of Sindh on 13 February 2023, to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day. ED CISSS was Keynote Speaker on the occasion. Four students of the university also made presentations. The Seminar was presided over by Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr Hamadullah Kakepoto. Chairperson Department of International Relations, Dr Ishrat Afshan Abbasi delivered the welcome address. The Speakers highlighted human rights abuses by India against the innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to suppress their right to self-determination. They rejected Indian unilateral and illegal action of 5 August 2019 of revocation of special status of IIOJK and emphasized that no unilateral action by India can change the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions. They expressed appreciation for Pakistan’s continued moral, diplomatic and political support for the realization of right to self-determination of people of Kashmir.

Talk by Michael Kugelman on Geopolitical Trends in South Asia



On the invitation of Executive Director Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) Ambassador (R) Qazi Khalilullah, Director of Wilson Center’s South Asia Institute Michael Kugelman visited CISSS on 20 February 2023. Kugelman is a leading specialist on Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and their relations with the US. He is a frequent visitor to Pakistan, and was in Karachi to attend the 14th Karachi Literature Festival (KLF).

At CISSS, Kugelman shared his perspective on the “Geopolitical Trends in South Asia”. He focused on the impact of sharpening and rising geopolitical tensions among big powers on South Asia.

In the context of the US efforts to counter China and China-India border tensions, Kugelman explained the rationale for growing defense partnership between Washington and New Delhi, conclusion of four foundational agreements between the two countries and inclusion of India in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and “Indo-Pacific Strategy.” However, in response to a question, Kugelman stressed that India is not in a position to be “Net Security Provider” in the region as envisaged by the US in its “Indo-Pacific Strategy”.

Kugelman underlined that despite some “hot borders” in the region including India’s border tensions with China, Line of Control (LoC) had remained calm since early 2021, due to agreement between Pakistan and India to observe ceasefire along the LoC. He agreed that India did not have a strategy to deal with a two-front situation, confronting both Pakistan and China at the same time. In response to questions about the Western silence on human rights abuses by India against its minorities and the people of occupied Kashmir and selective application of rules of the “rules-based international order”, Kugelman observed that foreign policy decisions in key global capitals were made on the basis of “realpolitik”. He underscored that the US is keen to have good relations with Pakistan, which is the only US ally in South Asia despite very close relationship between Washington and New Delhi.

While discussing the future prospects for young researchers of Pakistan in the US, Kugelman informed that under its “Pakistan Initiative”, Wilson Center was offering fellowships for thought leaders from Pakistan. He expressed interest in establishing a collaborative relationship between CISSS and Wilson Center which could include joint research projects.

Seminar cum Webinar on Balakot Crisis



To mark the 4th Anniversary of the success of Operation Swift Retort, CISSS organized a Webinar on Strategic Stability: Lessons from Balakot Crisis, on 27 February 2023. Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (R), Associate Professor of NUML Dr Rizwana Abbasi, Executive Director CISSS Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R) and Director Research CISSS Air Commodore Zahid-ul-Hassan spoke on various dimensions of the crisis.

Speakers recalled success of Operation Swift Retort of 27 Feb 2019, when PAF shot down two intruding Indian Air Force fighter aircraft and arrested one pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman. He was later handed over to India as a gesture of goodwill. It was highlighted during the Webinar that India had a history of committing acts of aggression and harboring counterforce temptations against Pakistan. This was evident from “Operation Brasstacks” of 1986-1987, threat of use of force by Indian leaders against Pakistan immediately after Indian nuclear tests in May 1998, planning of attacks on Pakistan during “Operation Parakram” in 2001-2002, attack on Balakot on 26 February 2019, firing of nuclear capable BrahMos missile on Pakistan in March 2022, India’s “Cold Start” military doctrine and attempts by Indian submarines to sneak into Pakistani waters several times in the past few years. Ambiguity in Indian “No-First-Use” doctrine was also indicative of New Delhi’s counterforce temptations against Pakistan. Speakers underscored that no direct war had ever taken place between the US and Soviet Union during Cold War. By attacking Balakot, India, therefore, became the first and the only nuclear weapon state in the world to attack another nuclear weapon state. However, due to Pakistan’s swift and devastating blow on 27 February 2019, India had not dared to commit any act of aggression against Pakistan since the Balakot crisis. Speakers underscored that Pakistan must continue to maintain Full Spectrum Deterrence which had closed the space for war between Pakistan and India created by Indian “Cold Start” doctrine. They appreciated Pakistan’s efforts to maintain strategic stability in South Asia and stressed the need for nuclear diplomacy to reduce the risk of war in the region. However, they acknowledged that realization of this objective was not possible unless there was a change of heart and willingness in New Delhi to resolve all outstanding disputes peacefully through dialogue with Pakistan, including Kashmir dispute.

Speeches of Advisor Development National Command Authority (AD NCA) Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, NI, HI, HI (M), (R)

I. Keynote Address at the International Conference on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Security: Global and Regional Perspectives jointly organized by the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) Islamabad and International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) held on 08 December 2021

1. Ladies and gentlemen. Good evening, and good morning, to all of you in your different time zones. I start with good wishes for everyone and the hope that since I last spoke at the IISS-CISS Workshop on the 6th of February 2020 at London everyone has remained safe from the ravages of the Covid-19 Pandemic which started to engulf the world just about the time as we dispersed that day.
2. Given the construct of today's topic the way I see it, there are four clear notions that need to be addressed in an integrated manner: there is Strategic Stability; there is Nuclear Security; Global Perspectives and Regional Perspectives on these. And because of the cooperative nature and context of the IISS-CISS traditional academic focus, when we will talk of regional perspectives South Asia will take center stage as the relevant context. Further, since today's event is in the nature of a continuum, I have considered it appropriate in my talk to first reconnect with the essence of what I had to say on the 6th of February 2020 as a recap, and from there pick up the threads of international and regional developments that have taken place during the last two years in as much as these are relevant to today's topic.
3. To recap I am highlighting three main points that I had made in the context of South Asian Strategic Stability two years ago in London:
4. The first point I made was that in the strategic stability-instability paradigm of South Asia it has become Pakistan's responsibility to ensure that strategic stability will not be disturbed to Pakistan's disadvantage at any stage despite India's consistent efforts to swing the pendulum towards instability. At each stage of the swing of the pendulum towards strategic instability Pakistan restored the strategic balance through appropriate and effective counter measures. In the last two years, the upward trend has continued unabated with India inducting, amongst others, destabilizing systems like the Rafael fighters, the S-400 System, the Predator Drones and generally upping the ante while pursuing the nuclear triad on land, air and particularly in the Nuclearization of the Indian Ocean. Pakistan will not let these destabilizing inductions or even doctrines to create instability; strategic stability will be maintained or re-established at all cost. Pakistan's responses should therefore be seen in that context.
5. The second point I made was with reference to India's failed air strike against Balakot in mainland Pakistan on 26th February 2019 consequent to its false flag operation at Pulwama, as a reckless strategy for domestic electoral purposes. In this regard I had said two things:
 - (1) One, that Pakistan's nuclear policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence had prevented the conflict from escalating to higher dangerous rungs and further therefore, I had cautioned India not to consider Pakistan's robust nuclear capability as a bluff as was then evident in the flawed thinking and statements of most in India's civil and military higher echelons.
 - (2) Two, if an irresponsible military adventure were to be undertaken by India, Pakistan will



respond forcefully under its retaliatory doctrine of Quid Pro Quo Plus. And indeed Pakistan did lay out an effective practical demonstration of the Quid Pro Quo Plus doctrine successfully the very next day of Balakot on the 27th of February 2019. Pakistan launched retaliatory air strikes around, not one, but three sensitive Indian military targets, shooting down two Indian fighters in the process, capturing one of the pilots (and letting him go home), creating operational paralysis in the IAF system of forces leading to the shooting down of an Indian helicopter by India's own air defences, generously sparing the Indian Army's very senior military leadership present at one of the ground targets and, at sea, allowing one Indian Naval submarine which had deliberately entered into Pakistani waters on an operational mission, to turn around and go home safely with a warning only. These Pakistani responses on land, air and at sea, I think, were 'plus' enough for one Balakot – and for one day! Let me caution India once again that if challenged Pakistan will do it again. I say this with emphasis because one hears again the whispers of a possible false flag operation by India as a signature Modi/BJP electoral strategy prior to the upcoming State Elections in February 2022 in 5 States including the critical States of Uttar Pradesh and East Punjab.

6. The third point I made was with reference to India's unfortunate transition from a vibrant secular democracy to a religious extremist-cum-fascist autocracy. I had said, and I quote, "the gloves are off, the mask is off, and the veneer of secularism is dead. India in 2020 is now well and truly Hindustan, of the Hindus, by the Hindus and for the Hindus. The transformation from India to Hindustan, over a period of 72 years, now carries the duly stamped ownership of the vast multitudes of the Hindu population which voted for the BJP/RSS heavily," unquote. Today, at the close of 2021, India's transition stands consolidated as reflected in India's formal state policies inside India, inside occupied Jammu and Kashmir, all across on the streets of India, in acts, in deeds, in formal legislation, and in the psycho-social schisms between communities and castes that have been promoted and encouraged by the State. These trends run contrary to the accepted norms of civilized societies and civilized behaviour, and carry within them the germs of not only internal social mayhem for India but also from Pakistan's perspective, the potential to destabilize the region at large. The hardened extremist mind-sets and attitudes prevalent in India today prevent rational thinking, discourage dialogue and diplomacy as instruments of peace and security, choose instead ill-considered indirect military and intelligence based strategies as simplistic solutions to complex regional conflicts. The cumulative effect of India's transformation from a vibrant secular democracy to a religious extremist autocracy has put at serious risk the notions of regional strategic stability and security; it is unsettling for India's neighbourhood.
7. Having recapped the three essential points that I had made in my talk two years ago, I shall now move on to recall some of the major global and regional events that have shaped geopolitics broadly in the last two years and how these have impacted strategic stability and security especially in South Asia.
8. While the world grappled with the pandemic, global and regional competitions and confrontations did not take a back seat. If at all the contours of the competition and confrontation have assumed sharper and more defined shapes with fallout effects everywhere especially, from our perspective, in South Asia. Strategic stability and security of nations continues to remain under pressure and the four countries directly affected, that is, the US, China, India and Pakistan continue to make policy adjustments according to their respective national interests. This is history in motion and in the making even as we enjoy observing it from our ringside seats. The final outcomes will perhaps be more clearly visible in the coming years only when the dust has settled and hopefully the strategic competitions have stabilized into a more manageable pattern.
9. The US election in November 2020, even though disputed strongly by both sides, resulted in President Joe Biden replacing President Trump in January 2021. The change of guard however signified no significant change in what may be labelled as a defining US C3 policy against China: Containment, Competition and Confrontation, not necessarily in that order. The

threat of a rising, and some think an already risen, China has focused sharply the undivided attention of the US and its allies. If at all the C3 policy has become only more strident generating far reaching global and strategic effects in different regions. While the C3 Policy is likely to vary in intensity and emphasis, on Containment, on Competition, on Confrontation according to the demands of a particular time, it does somewhat unfairly compel countries to choose sides reminiscent of the two decades ago syndrome of “you are either with us or against us”. Many countries find that discomfoting.

10. The world now seems to be on the cusp of a new cold war; groupings interestingly are being defined in near geometric terms and shapes. While we had long gotten used to the shape of the Pentagon as an international driving force but then we got the Quadrilateral or the Quad, and now recently the Triangular AUKUS. Nevertheless, the effects of the rise of China and the US C3 policy now being articulated through some of these groupings touch South Asia in different ways.
11. In this context I would like to mention two recent developments, one political and the other military, which are open to interpretations in more than one way but whose immediate effects have been felt but long term implications will take time to emerge.
12. First, the virtual meeting between President Biden and President Xi Jin Ping. It was historic, it was timely but above all it was an act of statesmanship. While future results will take time to emerge, one immediate effect probably should be to bring down by a degree or two the geopolitical global warming and that undoubtedly is good for global and regional strategic stability. Pakistan welcomes the dialogue.
13. Second, the test by China of a nuclear capable missile carrying a hypersonic glide vehicle including the launch of a separate missile from that vehicle after the vehicle had flown into space and completed a partial orbit of the earth. To put it mildly, it was impressive, it was unprecedented, and it was a surprise for most, some of whom quickly termed the event as a possible Sputnik moment! Whether it was a Sputnik moment or not, the impact of the test on global and regional strategic stability or instability will be determined in the coming years. There lurks, however, the danger that the missile test and the reported alarm about the exposure of a serious technology gap would be used or hyped to secure greater military budgets under the garb of closing the reported technology gap. This may open another avenue for an arms race down the strategic chain, a sure recipe for strategic instability globally and in regions like South Asia.
14. From global developments of the last two years I shall now move on to some of the key regional developments that from Pakistan’s perspective have either impacted or have the potential to impact strategic stability and security in South Asia. Amongst these I shall count Kashmir, the Indo-China clashes of the summer of 2020, Afghanistan and the consequences of US withdrawal.
15. First Kashmir. The strategic effects both political and military of the revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian Constitution on the 5th of August 2019 continue to reverberate strongly in the region. The Indian action of unilaterally declaring the territory of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as Union Territories has had politico-military consequences which are not going to go away. Both China and Pakistan rejected the action instantly as did the under occupation hapless Kashmiris who continue to suffer immense barbarities at the hands of nearly 900,000 Indian occupation forces as well as an open ended inhumane lockdown of their lives and society. 7 million human beings have been locked up in prison. That does not however weaken in any way the well-recognized fact that the Kashmir conflict remains the fundamental source of strategic instability in South Asia and an internationally acknowledged nuclear flashpoint.
16. Second, the Indo-China clashes on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The un-demarcated borders between India and China have a long history of being unstable which in the past led to the Indo-China War of 1962, the routing of India’s Army, loss of territory and in 2017 to the Doklam standoff. The 1962 War has left indelible scars on India’s politico-military psyche.

Despite this, India's ill-considered expansion of its road communications network and infrastructure development in the disputed areas of Ladakh on the Line of Actual Control with China together with the unilateral announcement of the absorption of Ladakh as Union Territory in 2019 invited what one might call the self-inflicted disaster in the summer of 2020. Consequent to China's reactions to the provocations, India reportedly lost over a thousand square kilometres of claimed territory without firing a bullet and was humiliated. Some of the strategic consequences of the clashes were:

17. Political acceptance of the losses by India's political leadership as *fait accompli* when Prime Minister Modi declared with a straight face that "no post has been lost, no territory has been lost". It amounted to capitulation indicating neither the capability nor the intention of recovering the lost territories.
18. The Indian military's follow on redeployments on the Chinese border of nearly 3800 kilometres from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east following the major intelligence failure and operational paralysis in mounting a response at Ladakh may affect its strategic and operational capabilities on its western borders with Pakistan. These redeployments in the north over time may even become permanent exacting a cost in men and materials as well as in strategies and doctrines in the coming years.
19. The emergence of a massive logistical effort in the extreme cold, barren winters of Ladakh at altitudes close to 14000 feet plus, is many times the size of the logistical effort required to maintain the Indian military occupation of the disputed Siachen Glacier.
20. To begin with, India made an exaggerated choice of strategic over reach in the last two years, driven by gung ho political over drive rather than military logic. Resultantly today, India is riding three tigers simultaneously; the LAC (Line of Actual Control with China), the LOC (Line of Control with Pakistan) and the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Now having trapped itself in a strategic quandary, India is propagating and selling the effects of its ill-considered strategic over reach under the bogus threat of a two front war scenario with China and Pakistan. This in order to appeal to its distant allies for more and more military and advanced technological assistance and play on the concerns of the US C3 Policy against China; this is typical and reminiscent of what India did post the 1962 Indo-China War debacle. If India's allies buy into these clever politico-military ploys of India, which they seem to, and introduce technologically advanced weaponry in the region, strategic stability in South Asia would be poorly served. It will create the effects of instability for Pakistan and will be unacceptable. Pakistan will be compelled therefore to respond as it deems fit and enhance reliance for its security in cost effective deterrence areas of its choice. History is witness to Pakistan's determination.
21. Third, the developments in Afghanistan. The successful conclusion of talks between the Trump Administration and the Taliban at Doha culminated in a framework agreement for withdrawal of US and allied troops from Afghanistan. However, in the implementation stage under the Biden Administration, the chaotic withdrawal of US and allied troops from Afghanistan together with the surprisingly rapid collapse of the Afghan National Army and the Ashraf Ghani Government led to the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban on the 15th of August this year. This was followed by a relatively short consolidation phase as the Taliban established their writ across all of Afghanistan including the Panjshir Valley.
22. The rapidly emerging adverse situation in Afghanistan came as a body blow to India as its two decades old strategy of bleeding Pakistan on its western borders through blatantly organized state terrorism collapsed overnight. The Indian contingents found safety in beating a hasty retreat from Afghanistan and India was in a state of shock over the debacle. India not only lost its politico-military-intelligence network and influence but also its heavy monetary and strategic investment in Afghanistan. Pakistan for now breathes easy because the security situation on the western border has started to improve.
23. At another level with reference to Afghanistan, however, Pakistan has been disappointed by the post-withdrawal policies of some in the international community towards Pakistan. Despite

Pakistan's sincere cooperation and facilitation in the Doha talks for nearly two years, subsequently in the evacuation of foreign citizens from Afghanistan, Pakistan has been scapegoated ruthlessly for the failings of others. A strange narrative was coined whereby Pakistan was held responsible for 20 years of follies. It remains quite beyond Pakistan's comprehension. As an important and responsible regional country, Pakistan nevertheless will exercise strategic patience for the headwinds to blow away and the dust to settle. Pakistan is a pivotal regional country and cannot be ignored for long.

24. In the meanwhile, in the immediate aftermath of the rapid power transition in Afghanistan, Pakistan has a vital role to play in preventing a looming humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan in the upcoming winter. Pakistan has taken a series of urgent steps in terms of sending large quantities of wheat, food, medicines and other relief goods to the stricken people of Afghanistan. Pakistan has also gone the extra mile in making an exception on humanitarian grounds and allowing the flow of 50000 Metric tons of wheat and medicines by road from India to Afghanistan. Pakistan stands ready to offer facilitation in this respect; this has got to be beyond politics.
25. And finally a few thoughts on the notion of nuclear security. In this context, let me start with recalling one of the fundamental principles of global perspectives on nuclear security. The fundamental principle that was agreed upon at the conclusion of the initiative taken by President Obama in the series of Nuclear Security Summits (NSS) was that nuclear security was a national responsibility. Let me repeat for emphasis nuclear security was a national responsibility. These summits were meticulously planned and professionally conducted by top ranking experts from a large number of countries after much debate. We are grateful to the experts for making the world a safer place
26. Pakistan values and follows the NSS conclusions in letter and spirit. Post 9/11, with the commencement of the War on Terror there were serious concerns the world over about nuclear materials falling in the hands of terrorists. The specter of a nuclear Armageddon as a consequence of such an eventuality happening, or at the very least the possibility of a dirty bomb exploding in cities, became a catalyst for laying the highest emphasis on securing nuclear materials and infrastructure the world over – but as a national responsibility. That is the global perspective. I recommend strongly that the focus on worldwide nuclear security must remain; however, the focus must be apolitical and not a tool for selective political intimidation.
27. As for Pakistan, we took our responsibilities and obligations with the seriousness that nuclear security demanded not only to address the broader international concerns on the issue but in Pakistan's own interest as a responsible nuclear power. Not after the post Nuclear Security Summit process but 11 years before that since the establishment in April 1999 of Pakistan's National Command Authority and the Strategic Plans Division as the one window institution for all matters nuclear in Pakistan, nuclear security of men, materials and infrastructure became a leading Pakistani priority. A professionally conceived comprehensive national nuclear security plan was implemented across the country in quick time. Some of the elements comprised of robust physical security including the raising of a variety of dedicated, well trained and well equipped security and intelligence forces, Personal Reliability Programmes (PRP), Material Control and Accounting (MC&A), establishment of a state of the art Training Academy, later renamed as PCENS or Pakistan Center of Excellence for Nuclear Security. PCENS has earned the distinction of recognition by the IAEA as a nuclear security regional training hub and is open to visitors. Similarly, on the diplomatic side, Pakistan entered the mainstream of a variety of international nuclear security related regimes. We went to the extent of saying that for nuclear security there were no upper limits to education. Where we felt necessary, we did not hesitate to cooperate and learn from the world while retaining our red lines.
28. I would like to say that like education in nuclear security, we also strongly believed that there were no upper limits to investment in nuclear security. Nuclear security is a process, a continuous process, where more and more investments reward you with more and more

professionally satisfying solutions to different threats and instills confidence. Pakistan invested heavily and today draws the benefits, comfort and confidence of a nuclear weapons power that has secured its nuclear men, materials and infrastructure according to the highest international standards. I would like to mention with satisfaction that in Pakistan, despite the geographical spread of vast numbers of nuclear facilities, there has not been a single instance of a nuclear security lapse; this includes the most intense period of foreign sponsored terrorism inside Pakistan between 2007 and 2014. Now that Pakistan has won its own war on terror through determined and professionally conducted operations, the overall internal threat has largely receded and the security environments have vastly improved. Having said that, the process of continuous improvements in nuclear security must go on because there must never be complacency. There are countries that I believe have strong National Technical Means (NTMs). I am sure they must have made good use of these because a large number of responsible international personalities whether visiting Pakistan or not, appreciated and expressed confidence on record in Pakistan's efforts in the areas of nuclear security.

29. Before I end, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express Pakistan's disappointment with the revival lately of uncalled for insinuations about Pakistan's nuclear security in the aftermath of the developments in Afghanistan post 15 August. First, in a consistent pattern of negative media reporting as an extension and veritable arm of pressure policy. Second, strangely enough, by some senior important personalities who I thought ought to know better from the vantage points of professional information and their high offices. The apprehensions expressed in certain otherwise responsible quarters about events in Afghanistan impacting Pakistan's nuclear security, are not only misplaced and ill-founded but, in my opinion, stretch one's professional imagination beyond reasonable logic.
30. Nuclear security is too serious a business to be used as tools of political intimidation, point scoring or subjected to inadequately deliberated statements. Pakistan would expect that considered opinions must reflect objectivity, evidence, professionalism, and meet the high standards of confidentiality lest these become counter-productive. If the canvass of genuine concern for global and regional nuclear security were to be broadened, politically and geographically, I can recommend areas in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood which need more focused attention and help in order to prevent smuggling of nuclear materials leading to international catastrophes.
31. I thank you ladies and gentlemen.

II. Keynote Address at the CISS-IISS 8th Workshop on Strategic Stability in South Asia held on 21 September 2022

1. Assalam Alaikum and good morning to all of you ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure as always to be amongst friends and top international and national academics, intellectuals at the 5th CISS-IISS Workshop. For someone who has been associated with this excellent initiative from the very beginning for almost a decade now, I find it most satisfying to see that the joint professional forum of the two leading think tanks of Pakistan and the United Kingdom continues to strengthen year after year. The forum has matured and it has maintained a strong forward momentum while focusing and remaining engaged with the dynamics of a delicately balanced state of strategic stability in South Asia. It has kept with the times as it grapples with rapidly changing geo-political scenarios emerging out of evolving strategic global play and technology developments.
2. Amongst others, the one thing that I find reassuring and comforting about the forum is consistency and continuity, in that, the highly regarded members of the forum of intellectuals and academics from both sides have seen the decade through providing quality inputs because of what one may term as institutional approach with institutional memory. I think the DNA of the forum has developed well.

3. At international intellectual forums like the IISS-CISS, I strongly believe that freedom of thought and expression of a variety of views, sometimes opposing, play a pivotal role in contributing meaningfully towards arriving at a rich mix of objective strategic thought. I pray that the forum will continue to have a bright future and go from strength to strength in carrying on the good work.
4. I warmly welcome the International Institute of Strategic Studies delegation from the UK.
5. At the outset I would like to recall a fundamental strategic reality prevailing in South Asia with reference to the swinging pendulum of the strategic stability-instability paradigm. In February 2020 in London, I had pointed out, with specific examples from five decades since the 1971 War between India and Pakistan, that over time it had become, by default, Pakistan's responsibility to ensure that the delicately poised balance of the state of strategic stability in South Asia will not be allowed to drift into a state of strategic imbalance or strategic instability thereby threatening regional peace. I had enumerated in some detail a consistent pattern in India's attempts to create strategic imbalances in futile attempts to disadvantage Pakistan and its security under the convenient cover of a China threat. I had mentioned seven destabilizing events which had nothing to do with the so called China threat when India chose to induce strategic instability in the region, on an average of once every decade. These included a variety of provocative conduct like repeated induction of destabilizing weapons and systems, conventional and nuclear; adoption of offensive and destabilizing doctrines, conventional and nuclear; conducting threatening military exercises with live ammunition and logistics close to our international borders which brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war on at least two occasions requiring the sanity of international interventions to impose calm; conduct of nuclear tests, ballistic / cruise missile tests; conducting recklessly ill-conceived and poorly executed military operations pompously labelled as surgical strikes on land and air; and now for some years, willingly becoming the cat's paw through joining destabilizing alliances and groupings, conceived, fuelled and encouraged by international powers in their attempts to contain China.
6. In the same context I had also stated then in February 2020 and would like to reiterate once again that all through these five decades long Indian attempts at generating strategic instability to Pakistan's disadvantage, Pakistan did not remain oblivious to the resultant induced and enhanced threat spectrum of any manner. Pakistan has in the past and will continue in the future to respond through its own calm and calculated strategies evolving pragmatic and cost effective response options to correct the imbalance and re-establish the disturbed strategic stability very quickly.
7. As an example of not too long ago, I can refresh memories by recalling Pakistan's strong riposte of 27 February 2019 when the Pakistan Air Force, under the policy of Quid Pro Quo Plus, took tile Indian Air Force to task in less than 24 hours for its sub-professional transgression against Pakistani sovereignty at Balakot. The Quid Pro Quo Plus retribution included two fighter planes downed over Kashmir, one of the pilots captured (and repatriated), senior military leadership present in a Brigade Headquarters spared during the Rajauri counter strike, an intruding submarine detected in Pakistani waters ordered to return home unharmed by Pakistan Navy, and a helicopter crash with seven casualties in an internal fratricide. The retribution ought to have conveyed Pakistan's policy, intent and determination to ensure that strategic stability will be maintained at all cost.
8. The bottom line has always been and will continue to be that Pakistan will never, and I repeat that Pakistan will never compromise on its national security and vital national interests. You can therefore be certain that Pakistan will fulfill its responsibility to ensure that strategic stability in South Asia will continue to prevail in the interest of peace. I am sure the message will be noted.

9. It has been a little over two and a half years since this forum last met in London in February 2020. The broad agenda drawn up for today's workshop most aptly reflects and encapsulates some of the major issues and developments during the period. Within the parameters of the agenda, by the end of the day, the forum would have reflected and discussed in two sessions important drivers of strategic stability and instability in South Asia both political and technological. Before these in the inaugural session one can expect a stimulating discussion on the painstakingly prepared IJSS Monograph titled "Nuclear Deterrence and Strategic Stability in South Asia: Perceptions and Reality". While reserving my right to differ on certain views and opinions expressed in the Monograph I would like to extend my sincere compliments to the eminent authors Mr. Antoine (Antwine) Levesques, Mr Desmond Bowen and Mr John Gill on the high quality of the intellectual work and the academic effort that has gone into preparing the study. The two eminent speakers of the Inaugural Session will have much more to say on this.
10. If we look back on the two and a half years that have gone by, you will agree that the Covid19 pandemic though a massive global health disaster, did not prevent the world from moving on, on the international geo-political mosaic. The global challenges of super power rivalry and jostling for competition have only sharpened global and regional fault lines leaving a large number of affected countries to generally fend for themselves in an effort to prevent ending up on the wrong side of history and events.
11. Largely, the major development during the period has taken place in Europe with the outbreak of war in Ukraine. We have seen that just as the US was preparing to focus more sharply on China and the Asia-Pacific region by winding up in Afghanistan and reducing its footprint in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine suddenly became the central politico-military issue that has taken away the focus, at least for some time now, from the US – China competition and rivalry and refocused on the US-Russia rivalry; in many ways, a US versus Russia-cum-China rivalry as the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting demonstrated. The Ukraine war has had fallout effects most certainly in South Asia - strategic, political and economic; the full impact of these is yet to be determined.
12. Additionally, super power rivalries and competition also cast a shadow in our region because groupings like AUKUS and Quad encourage arms build-up and destabilize South Asian strategic stability. In this context it is important to state that true to tradition, India has chosen to play a double game with the west by playing on both sides of the fence. India draws all the benefits of the western compulsion to prop it up as its cat's paw against China without undertaking any meaningful obligations or commitments. When it is payback time, India's policy of neutrality in the Ukraine war and disconnect with the west on sanctions against Russia are real life examples of hard core realpolitik at play with the west watching quite helplessly. We are not impressed by Prime Minister Modi's recent lecture to President Putin's face on the Ukraine war. Russia understands India's need for a diplomatic double play.
13. As for AUKUS, India and its lobbyists are already sending out feelers wherein they see an opportunity to replicate to India's advantage at some point in time in the future the nuclear proliferation exemption that is going Australia's way with the supply of eight US built nuclear submarines by 2040. If the instability pendulum were to swing that way in South Asia once again because of yet another play in exceptionalism, it is not difficult to foresee the strategic effects. That will be generated on strategic stability and on Pakistan's security. I have no hesitation in stating that minimum Pakistani counter measures would be put in place if a reckless imbalance is induced in South Asia. It is not a warning; it is a contingency foreseen. There are examples from the past when international exceptionalism has repeatedly been employed in South Asia without a consideration given to Pakistani security concerns. But then

there are also examples when Pakistan did not let international exceptionalism stand in its way to redress imbalances.

14. In this context I would like to say that much has been made of India's exaggerated notions of a so called threat from China as a convenient cover for masking India's build up against Pakistan and ambitions as a regional power. India is being wishfully propped up by the west as a potential counter weight to China giving short shrift to strategic stability in South Asia. History is quite clear that the China card has been played, perhaps overplayed, repeatedly by India to the western gallery for acquisition of modern western weaponry, high technology and proliferation exemptions. History also tells us the unfortunate outcomes of India's strategies, military ambitions and the weaponries in 1962 and lately in Doklam and Ladakh. Even the latest so-called disengagement agreement in Ladakh is essentially formalization and freezing of the reverses that India suffered in 2020. I shall leave it at that.
15. I want to move on to another issue that I had raised in London in 2020 with regard to the seriousness of a new factor as an emerging threat to strategic stability not only in South Asia but one that would pose in due course of time an extended threat to the region and to the world at large. In the two and a half years. Gone by, the threat has only hardened and assumed a real life character and momentum of its own. I refer to the toxic and lethal mix of the rise of hard core and ruthlessly aggressive Hindutva fundamentalist ideology which has permeated all sections of Indian society, the Indian government and has found welcome resonance amongst the Indian diaspora in the west, together with the custodial controls of India's large triad of the nuclear arsenal now having fallen firmly in the hands of an extremist fundamentalist leadership. This toxic mix of poisonous ideology and custody of nuclear weapons is a relatively new phenomenon and poses serious threat to strategic stability in South Asia putting it on edge.
16. The intoxication of the extremists was put on full display at the highest levels of India's BJP leadership when it opted to attack Pakistan's mainland territory, not disputed territory but mainland territory, in February 2019 at Balakot, oblivious to the serious consequences of committing aggression against a nuclear weapons power. That Pakistan responded with a measured but strong riposte that I have mentioned earlier was a sign of Pakistan's maturity and restraint.
17. Fast forward to March 2022 earlier this year to yet another Indian military aggression inside three years against Pakistan's mainland territory. The now BJP-Oriented Indian military launched deep inside Pakistan a nuclear capable Brahmos missile with a controlled trajectory, pre-planned vertical and horizontal way points coordinates fed into the on board guidance and control computer along with the geographical coordinates of the launch point and the target. The objective was very clear; to test Pakistan's air defence alert levels and operational responses. India did not particularly care that the missile posed a destructive threat for some 7-8 minutes to at least a dozen commercial airlines in the air at the time.
18. I would like to state with complete responsibility and confidence that the launch was no accident as claimed slyly by India. The launch could not have taken place without political clearance at the highest level and detailed planning over a number of days and weeks in the military chain of command to include technical preparations of the missile, the missile launcher, storage and ground deployment drills with full involvement of the immediate missile launch crew of at least 10-15 odd personnel besides the hundreds of other personnel that comprise a Brahmas strategic missile group.
19. Ladies and gentlemen. I have lived, breathed and conducted test and training launches, with troops on ground, of an array of strategic ballistic and cruise missiles for 15 years as DG SPD; perhaps over 50 in number. I know my missiles and missile technology. I know the sequence of technical preparations, the sequence of deployment drills and SOPs that just have to be followed without which a missile launch can never take place. Nuclear capable ballistic and

cruise missiles are highly complex state of the art machines with meticulously detailed and controlled launch procedures and SOPs including the capability to self-destruct if things go wrong. These do not fire off accidentally like infantry rifles during weapons cleaning drills. India put out a well-rehearsed though laughable cover story of an accidental launch, which is technically and operationally speaking entirely mischievous, to pull wool over our eyes and the world's. No serious professional will buy the silly story. Three IAF officers have reportedly been made the fall guys for what essentially was a military operation conducted against Pakistan. I recommend strongly that India look after them and compensate them well for their silence. On both occasions, at Balakot 2019 and Shorkot 2022, Pakistan displayed restraint and maturity in the irresponsibly generated tensions thereby preventing South Asia from spiralling into potential catastrophes. It will be foolhardy to take Pakistan's restraint and maturity as a weakness and continue to test the limits of strategic stability. Perhaps India is attempting to establish a pattern of incidents over time as a strategy in order to desensitize the international community For Future Operations.

20. No address on strategic stability by a Pakistani speaker can be complete without drawing attention to the criticality of conflict resolution for peace and stability in South Asia. Peace and stability in our region will unfortunately remain ever-elusive till a just and honourable resolution of the Kashmir dispute is found to the satisfaction of all parties to the dispute; India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris. India (and the world) can continue to delay the resolution of the Kashmir conflict for another day through brutality, suppression, political engineering, apartheid of the worst kind, and what have you, but Kashmir can never be brushed under the carpet forever. Kashmir will remain a bleeding wound. Human spirit has resilience the ferocity of which has come back to haunt the oppressor at various points in history. India might consider taking a lesson or two from a variety of freedom movements around the world for centuries past. Being at the core of South Asian peace and stability, the Kashmir dispute will have to be addressed with maturity, dignity and statesmanship. On its part Pakistan will continue to extend moral and political support to the Kashmiri freedom movement till that happens. There are benefits in strategic Patience.
21. I have highlighted issues that affect strategic stability in South Asia subjecting the stability instability paradigm to swing either way, sometimes dangerously and to the brink. These are Pakistani perspectives. I quite understand that there are Indian and international perspectives on the issues as well as geo-political pulls and pressures which cast their shadows in our region. Many of the earlier workshops conducted at this forum, which carries an important voice worldwide, have discussed and debated the issues of South Asian strategic stability from a variety of angles. Today again is an opportunity to examine these not only from angles as planned in the agenda but also in the discussion sessions to go beyond the agenda, if necessary, in search of ways and means that might be helpful in furthering the goal of bringing the elusive strategic stability to a region where two nuclear powers continue to remain locked eyeball to eyeball.

Delta narrative against Pakistan

By Executive Director CISSS Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R) published in The Express Tribune on 21 September 2021



Owing to the willful negligence of the West, the world has failed to prevent the spread of Delta variant of Covid-19, which originated in India. Consequently, more than 130 countries have been affected by the so-called Delta variant that has caused colossal human and economic losses. There are consequences of keeping doors open to Indian Delta carriers, despite irrefutable evidence that the country is an epicentre of Covid-19.

Since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, West is a victim to sinister Indian narrative scapegoating Pakistan for the American rout. This Western bias can be called Delta Narrative. It is marinated in Indian animosity towards Pakistan to undermine Afghanistan's prospects of peace, stability and economic development.

Former US national security advisor John Bolton ranks high among Indian apologists and has a history of Delta Narrative. On 23 August 2021, in a piece in WaPo, he ill-advised the US to commit to a policy that would fuel conflict and instability in the region. One gets astounded at the flight of Bolton's imagination about the possible impact of Taliban-led Afghanistan on Pakistan's future and its nuclear weapons. He advocated accelerating the US tilt towards India and punitive measures against Pakistan. Bolton's Pakistan-itch is as well-known as his taste for new American conflicts around the world. He is considered as a foreign policy hawk, nationalist, neoconservative and a warmonger. It is believed that President Trump fired him for such inconsistencies in judgement. Although he lacks credibility, the former NSA's inaccurate statements must not go unchallenged. Notwithstanding Bolton's "compelling reasons" to endlessly sustain the US and NATO military presence in Afghanistan, the policy decision of Trump, and of President Biden, to withdraw from Afghanistan and push for a political settlement was right.

A military solution was never a panacea for Afghanistan. Without any evidence, Bolton pinned the blame for failure in Afghanistan on Pakistan. Is it Islamabad's fault that the 300,000-strong Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, trained by the US, collapsed like a house of cards? Is Pakistan responsible for the wastage of at least \$83 billion of the American taxpayers' money? The former NSA should have looked up various American assessments that expose lack of governance, corruption, desertions and ghost soldiers that led to the failure in Afghanistan. The so-called war on terror has cost Pakistan dearly in blood and treasure — 80,000+ casualties and at least \$150 billion. Islamabad partnered with the US to defeat al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The blowback was enormous: urban centres were bombed, millions of people were displaced, and India used this as an opportunity to wage terrorism in Pakistan through Afghanistan. Regrettably, instead of receiving appreciation, Islamabad has been a target

of propaganda from the likes of Bolton. Pakistan benefits the most from peace and stability in Afghanistan but India and some others do not. In his recent book, Bolton claimed that one of the primary reasons for American presence in Afghanistan was to keep an eye on Pakistan's nuclear programme. Conversely, Pakistan has been facilitating the efforts for a political settlement in Afghanistan to reap dividends of economic security and regional connectivity.

Bolton also claimed that Pakistan's nuclear assets will end up in the hands of terrorists. That is an unfounded and politically motivated expression of concern. Although Islamabad does not need any external certificate for its nuclear safety and security credentials, it is worth recalling that IAEA and several American top officials have praised Pakistan's nuclear safety and security regime. It is obvious that Bolton neither chose to take these into account nor did he have the good sense to point out the recent grave nuclear security lapses in India. Pakistan's national nuclear security regime is governed by the National Command Authority, which is a well-defined nuclear command and control structure, chaired by the PM. The regime is based on extensive legislative and regulatory framework governing the security of nuclear materials. Pakistan also has a stringent Personnel Reliability Programme and elaborate intelligence and security setups to deal with issues related to nuclear security. The system has worked effectively for well over two decades in ensuring security of the country, security of the assets themselves, radiating the necessary deterrence effects and has facilitated the development of strategic weapons as per the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence, evolving over time to the policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence in 2011.

It is the confidence in the efficacy of the system validated over time including the peak periods of terrorism in the country that allows Pakistani decision-makers to reassure the nation and the international community about the safety and security of the strategic assets. Being a party to various international instruments that are aimed at strengthening national and global nuclear security architecture, Pakistan has engaged with the international community for years to dispel the myths and ludicrous insinuations that were carried in Bolton's piece. There is a need to worry about the nuclear arsenal of India, which at present is in the hands of a Hindu extremist party, where extremism is on the rise, whose propensity for revisionism and conflict is well-known, and whose Prime Minister has openly boasted about India's nuclear arsenal not being for fireworks. India is the only nuclear-armed state that has committed an act of aggression against another nuclear power.

For geopolitical reasons, the world looks the other way on India's irresponsible nuclear behaviour. India acted irresponsibly when its fighter aircraft intruded Pakistan airspace on 26 February 2019 and dropped bombs in Balakot. India was given a waiver by the Nuclear Suppliers Group and also allowed to operate eight reactors outside the IAEA safeguards. The three cases of nuclear material trafficking that surfaced recently in India have not rung alarm bells because of political reasons. Yet, Bolton advocates an accelerated US "tilt" towards India. Bolton should understand that scapegoating one's failures never helps. Unfounded and unwarranted allegations made in his piece against Pakistan must therefore be rejected, with the contempt it deserves.

Pakistan has always been a peace-loving and peace making country. Islamabad worked closely with the US, China, Russia and other countries to facilitate dialogue and agreement between the US and Taliban. It also facilitated reconciliation process between Taliban and Ashraf Ghani-led government, but he fled the country. Pakistan is a leader in extending assistance to international community evacuating from Afghanistan. Islamabad has no favourites in Afghanistan and supports an inclusive government in Kabul. Conversely, Bolton and his likes have always had favourites and continue to pay the price for that. An Afghanistan which is at peace with itself as well as at peace with others is in the best interest of everyone. Afghanistan needs a healing touch. Pakistan is willing to work with international community to extend all

possible assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

To conclude, it is worth recalling that in January 2011, during his visit to Pakistan, the then Vice President Biden said, "... we have learned from the past that only a productive way forward, the only productive way forward is a long-term enduring partnership [with Pakistan]." Pakistan hopes that President Biden will not cloud his judgement by the birds of Bolton's feather. He has extensive experience in the region and would not pay heed to the Delta Narrative against Pakistan, spoilers and primary architects of the debacle, who are least qualified to offer suggestions and are unable to draw any lessons from the history.

Deconstructing India's two-front Mantra

By Research Officer Abdul Samad published in Pakistan Observer on 2 February 2022

According to the international security expert Barry Buzan, nation states construct threats through framing, speech acts and referent objects. One of the central concepts in securitization theory is 'showing the rhetorical structure of decision-makers when framing an issue and attempting to convince an audience to lift the issue above politics'.

India's much trumpeted mantra of fighting a two-front war fits into Professor Buzan's argument and reflects the subjective construction of a collusive threat from Pakistan and China. The smokescreen of a two-front challenge has been constructed by New Delhi for multiple self-serving purposes. In essence, India uses this mantra as a ploy to extract political and military concessions from the West. Internally, the Indian military amplifies the threat to secure more funding under the guise of combat readiness. This façade also serves to hide India's own follies under the Modi government.

In actual fact, India's unilateral measures of 5 August 2019 to revoke the special status of Kashmir and incorporate occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as Union exacerbated tensions with China over the status of Ladakh. Modi's political blunder also stoked anti-India sentiment in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Both Pakistan and China rejected Indian illegal actions. In public pronouncements, senior Indian military officials such as the late General Bipin Rawat and former Indian Air Chief R K S Bhadauria have called for operational readiness using the two-front mantra. This has been packaged as a collusive threat and propagated through a compliant media.

Academic discourse from within India, however, testifies to the reality that India's two-front narrative is fallacious and politically motivated. Evidence for this comes from saner voices such as that of Sushant Singh, a retired military official who has served as Deputy Editor of the Indian Express. In an April 2021 Stimson issue brief, Singh explains how India has concocted the two-front challenge and its military command has amplified it in order to 'provide an unambiguous political and military focus on strategic and operational initiatives to ensure readiness.'

India's Cold Start Doctrine against Pakistan has been formulated using the same language of combat readiness and troop mobility. In India's strategic calculus, there is realization that a two-front war might never materialize. Indian generals recognize that the People's Liberation Army of China is a vastly superior fighting force that is rapidly building capabilities in artificial intelligence, hypersonic missiles and electronic warfare.

China's formidable military modernization has raised alarm bells even in Western capitals, suggesting that New Delhi is no match for China. Questions can and have been raised on the capability of the Indian military to fight even on a single front. India's array of weapon systems lacks interoperability which reduces their effectiveness at the operational level. Late General

Bipin Rawat during his tenure as Army Chief in 2019 acknowledged that for intense war fighting with China, the Indian military would require 30 days of ammunition stock, which it did not possess.

War on two fronts would also involve the ‘separation of forces’ as it would be difficult to move troops from one theatre to another, thereby reducing inter-theatre mobility. The Stimson report therefore recommends that the ‘smartest choice for New Delhi is to neither fight nor prepare to fight a two front-war’. It belies logic that a ‘resource constrained, overstretched and vulnerable’ military can sustain combat on two fronts. As a matter of fact, India has recently faced humiliation at the hands of both Pakistan and China. Pakistan shot down two intruding Indian Air Force aircraft on 27 February 2019 and captured one of the pilots Wing Commander Abhinandan in response to Indian aggression against Pakistan. India lost 20 soldiers in skirmishes with China in the Galwan Valley in June 2020.

Pakistan itself faced a two-front war scenario over the last two decades. Pakistan’s Eastern border with India has remained a permanent front since independence. India opened another front for Pakistan by using Afghan soil to foment terrorism in Pakistan. Additionally, the conflict in Afghanistan over the last two decades has had devastating spillover effects into Pakistan. Despite the dual challenge of Indian state-sponsored terrorism and tensions on the LOC, Pakistani Armed Forces have been able to effectively counter these threats.

It is globally recognized that through sustained diplomacy, engagement with all stakeholders and dialogue, Pakistan was successful in promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan by working closely with interested countries, in particular the United States, China and Russia. Pakistan’s participation in the Moscow Format of Consultations and the extended troika meeting on Afghanistan have been instrumental in this regard. Pakistan’s support for Doha Peace Talks enabled the US and Taliban to sign a landmark agreement on peace and reconciliation and withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s peace-oriented approach was thus able to transform a security threat into an opportunity for win-win cooperation. Pakistan has been consistent in its desire to engage with India on all outstanding disputes including Kashmir. The tendency on the Indian side has been to construe Pakistan’s desire for peace as a weakness. However, Pakistan has time and again demonstrated its capability and resolve to respond effectively to any Indian misadventure. The Balakot incident is a case in point. Given these ground realities, India’s counterforce temptations towards Pakistan and talk of so-called surgical strikes inside Pakistani territory can only be explained through the prism of political opportunism, hegemonic designs and brinkmanship. Modi’s warmongering and temptation to seek electoral gains through false flag operations in IIOJK have undermined prospects for regional peace and stability.

Needless to say, in a nuclear Southern Asia, talk of a two-front war is fraught with danger. Given the monumental challenges of poverty alleviation, sanitation, COVID-19 pandemic and development facing India, it would be prudent if New Delhi were to resolve disputes with its nuclear neighbours peacefully through dialogue and join connectivity projects that hold the promise of promoting regional and global prosperity.

Time to import LNG from Russia

By Executive Director CISSS Ambassador Qazi M. Khalilullah (R) published in Arab News on 24 February 2022

According to media reports, Italian LNG Company ENI and Singapore-based GUNVOR have cancelled their term LNG cargoes, scheduled for delivery to Pakistan in March 2022. Since the signing of the term agreement by Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) in 2017, ENI has defaulted four times and GUNVOR two times on term LNG cargoes. The reason for the default is believed to be higher spot prices, prompting these companies to sell LNG cargoes meant for Pakistan in the spot market. The present gas crisis in Pakistan is mainly due to unethical practices of these two companies.

Due to the devastating impact of gas shortages on households, industry, businesses and the transport sector, Pakistan needs reliable partners for sourcing LNG. For some time now, Pakistan has viewed Russia as a source for LNG import. Russia too has looked at Pakistan as a potential market for its LNG export. This mutuality of interest resulted in the signing of a Government to Government (G2G) Agreement between Islamabad and Moscow on 13 October 2017 on “Cooperation in the Sphere of Liquefied Natural Gas Supplies.” Russian Public Joint Stock Company Gazprom and PLL were nominated for implementation of the agreement. However, the agreement has remained dormant ever since. According to reliable sources, Russia, nevertheless, remains keen on cooperating with Pakistan in the sphere of LNG.

Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to Russia on 23-24 February 2022, which marks the culmination of sustained efforts made by both Pakistan and Russia over the last one and a half decades to enhance relations in diverse fields, offers an opportunity to explore the possibility of concluding a long-term arrangement with Russia on provision of LNG to Pakistan. As an energy giant, Russia is a major supplier of piped as well as liquefied gas to many countries in Europe and elsewhere. India is also among the LNG importers from Russia.

Cooperation between Pakistan and Russia in the field of energy will, in any case, be a key item on the agenda of Prime Minister Imran Khan’s summit with President Vladimir Putin during the two-day visit, as both countries seek to implement the bilateral agreement signed in Islamabad in 2015 on the 1100 km long North-South (renamed Pakistan Stream recently) gas pipeline that would be built by Russia from Karachi to Kasur with investments of over US\$ 2 billion.

Energy cooperation has always been one of the most important topics during the meetings of the leaders of the two countries as well as Russia-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Seven meetings of the IGC have been held so far. The last meeting was held in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg on 24-26 November, 2021. It was chaired by the Minister for Economic Affairs Omar Ayub Khan from the Pakistan side and Minister for Energy Nikolai Shulginov from the Russian side.

At the seventh IGC meeting, apart from reiterating their respective commitment to the Pakistan stream gas pipeline, the two sides agreed to explore cooperation in many other areas of mutual interest in the energy sector including offshore and onshore oil and gas exploration, non-destructive testing of oil and gas transport infrastructure, joint projects in pipeline construction, geological exploration for hydrocarbons and joint development of oil and gas fields. Both sides also discussed the possibility of investment by Russian companies in setting up oil refineries and building strategic oil and gas storage in Pakistan.

Pakistan and Russia also have interests in a regional undersea gas pipeline. In this connection,

Inter-State Gas Systems (ISGS) of Pakistan and Gazprom of Russia signed a MoU in February 2019 on conducting feasibility studies for a subsea pipeline from Middle East to South Asia. Russia and Pakistan can also cooperate on other regional projects such as TAPI gas pipeline project from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan and CASA-1000 power transition project from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan.

In view of depleting gas reserves in Pakistan, strengthening cooperation with a reliable partner like Russia is critical for Pakistan's energy security. Prime Minister's visit to Russia is therefore not only timely but also an opportunity to further strengthen cooperation with Russia, inter alia, in the important field of energy. Needless to say, the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow will take Pakistan-Russia relations to a new level.

AUKUS and Its Implications on Maritime Security

By Director Research Dr Mohid Iftikhar and Research Assistant Muhammad Usama Khan published in Geopolitical Monitor on 14 March 2022

Maritime security scholars and practitioners are on a constant watch in assessing developments in seas. Today the scope of maritime security has widened because geopolitical conceptualization has become its major tenet. As rightly noted by Germond, "the geopolitical dimension of maritime security accounts for the way geography constrains and informs (directly or indirectly) maritime security policies, regulations, measures and operations, as well as how states take (tacitly or explicitly) geography into account when developing their maritime security strategies." It is thus the very logic of the geographic realm that defines opportunities and constraints in the seas which directly affect regions and state behaviour.

There is abundant literature in social sciences that explains maritime security issues from a traditional lens such as drug trafficking, illegal fishing, piracy, and environmental crimes. However, the contemporary understanding of geopolitics in spheres of maritime security in wider policy debates remains inadequate. The recent AUKUS deal signed between Australia, the UK, and the US is a geopolitical development with strong linkages to maritime security. Simply, the most imminent challenge posed by the AUKUS is evolving strategic competition in the region. This logic can be elucidated from Bueger, Edmunds, and Ryan's understanding that "the contemporary maritime security agenda should be understood as an interlinked set of challenges of growing global, regional and national significance, and comprising issues of national, environmental, economic and human security." Therefore, geopolitical developments in the seas are integral to maritime security as they can affect freedom of movement, seaborne trade, and sea lines of communication (SLOCs).

The AUKUS is a strategic defense alliance between Australia, the US and the UK that came into being in September 2021. A joint statement issued by prime ministers Johnson and Morrison and President Biden stated that AUKUS is an "enhanced trilateral security partnership." In addition, there is consensus between AUKUS members that it "will help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific." To some degree, this signals a paradigm shift in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) maritime structure.

We must understand why geopolitics remains at the core of contemporary maritime security. Great and regional power competition in the seas has historic origins. For instance, we can review the balance of power structures during World Wars I and II and how it led great and rising powers to develop formidable navies to secure new economic resources. Today, it can be observed that the cross-currents of political geography such as US-China and US-Iran tensions

have threatened maritime trade and freedom of navigation. According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi concerning US-China tensions 2018-2019, “the dip in maritime trade growth is a result of several trends including a weakening multilateral trading system and growing protectionism.” One way to understand the effects of geopolitical events on the maritime economy is rising marine war insurance premiums. For instance, S&P Global notes that “marine hull war rates for ships heading to the Gulf jumped in mid-2019 following a spate of attacks on oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping channel, in May and June of that year, and the seizing of British-flagged vessel Stena Impero in July.” In addition, reported by the Wall Street Journal international operators such as Maersk Line and Mediterranean Shipping Company were winding up their shipping operations in Iran due to the US sanctions in May 2018. Now the recent US, UK, and Australia “AUKUS” agreement for transferring the latter; nuclear submarine technology, high-end artificial intelligence, cyber, quantum technologies, and undersea capabilities including underwater sensors and drones, raises important questions. At the diplomatic level, one, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted “five harms to the region” mainly nuclear proliferation, a new round of arms race, undermining regional prosperity and stability, sabotaging the building of a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia and the resurgence of the Cold War mentality. Two, AUKUS temporarily hampered French ties with the US and Australia. This raises novel policy concerns in regards to China’s response and the cohesiveness of the American-led alliance system.

More recently in December 2021 Australia, the UK and the US held trilateral meetings of the Joint Steering Group for Advanced Capabilities and the Joint Steering Group for Australia’s Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program in the Pentagon. The text by the White House reinforces how the AUKUS deal seeks to enter a new phase of geopolitical competition that would set a tone for a paradigm shift in maritime security. Primarily, the text highlights commitment to Australian capabilities and emphasizes the security of the Indo-Pacific alongside four central areas of focus “cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.”

While AUKUS remains a long-term project, however, once Australia acquires nuclear-powered submarine capabilities, the maritime security dynamics in the APAC region may face political risks. According to the former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans “from one point of view, it is not bad that China gets the message – as it no doubt also has from the emergence of the Quad grouping, bringing together the US, Japan, Australia, and India – that there is an evolving will among other significant regional players to build stronger defence capability and cooperation.” Further, regional economic stability due to seaborne trade also remains a pressing concern. It is crucial to mention that the Asian region’s global maritime trade accounted for 41% of total goods loaded in 2020. Moreover, the Asian region’s port significance includes eight out of the top ten ports which include five in China. Therefore, the security and stability of the SLOCs are vital for regional states in Asia.

What remains a concern in the South China Sea for geopolitical and trade experts is that “a worst-case planning scenario entails all three straits (as well as other possible Southeast Asian SLOCs) being unavailable for commercial traffic, forcing vessels to sail around the southern coast of Australia.” This would result in weeks of delay in the global supply chain and through economic modelling, it is found that “Singapore’s economy would fall by 22%, according to the baseline estimate. Hong Kong, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia would suffer falls of between 10% and 15%...Australia would suffer a drop of between 1.9% and 3.1%. The economies of Japan and South Korea would fall by between 2% and 3%.” In such a hypothetical scenario closure of maritime access due to longer port distances would result in changing global trade costs.

The complex security dynamics are also at interplay because of missile technology transfer under the AUKUS. According to Ogilvie (2021), and Rear Admiral (R) John Gower Former Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (UK), “the transfer of Tomahawk cruise missiles to Australia highlights two issues: a potential broadening of the risks of accidental war and a weakening of the Export Control Regime that deals with sensitive missile technologies (the MTCR).” Further, Moloney observes that for Australia after signing the AUKUS deal “for starters, where will the fuel come from? Will Australia eventually be required to process and enrich uranium?” Importantly, the dimensions of nuclear proliferation under the AUKUS must be carefully calculated.

The AUKUS deal is a geopolitical development with strong linkages to maritime security. While the deal is yet in its early stages, it does provide strong indicators through texts such as by the White House that the US through its alliance-based structure seeks to reinforce its policeman role in the so-called Indo-Pacific. Lastly, Australian direction under the AUKUS yet poses several puzzles, therefore, overestimations of a geopolitical conflict remain averse to social scientific norms. Scholars and policy-makers must carefully weigh and evaluate the sequence of events that unfold through the AUKUS.

COP26 and climate developments in Pakistan

By Director Research Dr Mohid Iftikhar and Research Officer Farzana Wahid Buksh published in Global Village Space on 15 March 2022

The climate change dilemma has taken a new toll where rising temperatures, food insecurity, mass migrations, and socio-economic instability have become the center of debates. There is a lot of literature and evidence in both environmental sciences and public policy that discusses the causes of climate change as well as its implications on social well-being. Rightly pointed out in a study on climate change that “under continued global warming, extreme events such as heat waves will continue to rise in frequency, intensity, duration, and spatial extent over the next decades.”

In relation, this dramatic path has led global institutional instruments such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) through the Conference of the Parties (COP) to strengthen consensus and cooperation amongst states to limit global warming for avoiding the catastrophes of climate change.

The earliest COP dates back to 1995 and its outcomes were mainly policy discussions concerning its institutional structure and mechanisms. Over the years COPs have generated much attention as they have been able to disseminate awareness on issues of climate crises. More recently, COP26 was held from 31st October to 12th November 2021, in Glasgow, where policy actions regarding climate change were at the center. It is vital to note that instruments such as COPs naturally involve various stakeholders such as sovereigns, corporations and citizens as they seek to understand how international institutional structures steer political and economic directions yoked to climate change.

Students of the political economy need to understand linkages between global instruments of climate change and states’ domestic structure. As COPs, while being structural often are constrained due to states’ political-economic system. It must be recalled that the discussions that took place at the Paris Agreement in 2015 aimed to promote measures and investments related to a sustainable low carbon future. According to the UNFCCC “Paris Agreement’s central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global

temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.” Despite the consensus at the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases have kept rising.

It is rightly pointed out that the pledges made by 196 countries under the Paris Agreement have not been implemented by most countries. Further, scientists observe that many countries would continue to increase their emissions, especially after global economic recovery due to the lifting of pandemic restrictions. At COP26 nearly 200 states parties participated and focused on keeping global warming at 1.5°C. An important development was the U.S.-China Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s. This focused on US-China intended cooperation in areas of “regulatory frameworks and environmental standards related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases in the 2020s; maximizing the societal benefits of the clean energy transition; policies to encourage decarbonization and electrification of end-use sectors; key areas related to the circular economy, such as green design and renewable resource utilization; and deployment and application of technology such as CCUS and direct air capture.”

In addition, COP26 was the first-ever conference where over 40 countries agreed to cut coal usage as it accounts for nearly 40% of annual CO₂ emissions. However, due to China and India’s last-minute concern, it was agreed to “phase down”, rather than “phase out” coal usage. It must be pointed that the domestic political economy structures remain a central factor in shaping such state behaviour. For instance, energy needs, market conditions and bureaucratic structures are some key factors determining the implementation of global climate policies.

It must be recalled how the Trump Administration pulled out of the Paris Agreement. According to Zhang et al (2017) “the fossil fuel industries hold powerful political clout over the Trump Administration and the Republican Party: It has been reported that Trump himself, Vice President Pence and EPA Administrator Pruitt are all personally closely associated with the petrochemical mogul Koch Industries. Once the U.S. withdraws from the Paris Agreement, the Trump Administration will seek to repeal climate regulations to benefit energy companies including Koch Industries.”

The main challenge that remains towards global climate finance is its fragmentation because of the numerous stakeholders involved and their interests. For instance, climate finance impediments arise due to diversification in funding sources, execution networks and prioritization by sectors. Further, alongside states’ domestic political-economic system, multilateral channels of climate finance mainly the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) under the UNFCCC and Green Climate Fund (GCF) are the primary instruments of global climate finance. However, these “funds’ histories and governance shape their strategic outlook and coordination with other climate finance actors.” Hence, the lack of coherence in the distribution of climate finance funds remains a core issue.

While at COP26, “parties welcomed new financial pledges made to the Adaptation Fund (totalling over USD 350 million) and to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) (totalling over USD 600 million) that will translate into helping vulnerable people bolster resilience.” However, patterns from previous COPs are vital to comprehend as they allow us to measure the magnitude of the outcomes. For instance, the previous pledge to deliver \$100 billion climate finance by 2020 agreed at COP15 in 2009 has yet not produced deliverable outcomes. In essence, COPs, lack an enforcing mechanism that ensures states would implement policies of climate change. It must be pointed out that there is no procedure of rewarding or punishing states regarding greenhouse gas emissions. At COP26 more than 100 countries pledged to prevent and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. However, we must recall “the New York Declaration on Forests” of 2014 as it failed to achieve its goals because it was a non-

legally binding political agreement. In this context, accountability and legal framework could play a viable role in the implementation of various agreements and pledges of COP26.

It is vital to point out is that COP26 displayed an umbrella of policy solutions. However, it lacks firm commitments to decrease emissions. Therefore, new scholarship must be advanced in political economy that explores complex policy mechanisms of state's domestic systems and how they translate global climate change outcomes. For example, in India's case, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA) "energy use has doubled since 2000, with 80% of demand still being met by coal, oil and solid biomass." Moreover, while countries were urged to speed up the phase-out of "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies at COP26, no clear deadlines were specified.

The implementation of COP26 pledges is essential for the states such as Pakistan, as it is one of the most vulnerable states being affected by climate change. One, it must be observed that Pakistan contributes less than 1% to global carbon emissions. However, Global Climate Risk Index 2021 observes that Pakistan ranks eighth on the list of countries that are most affected by climate change. The German Watch report 2021 notes that Pakistan has witnessed 173 extreme weather events from 2000 to 2019 and has lost 0.52% per unit of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to climate change.

For instance, the seriousness of climate implications can be seen in the case of Lahore city which contributes 11-12% to the national GDP. According to a Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) Pakistan study (2000) the widespread fog found in north-eastern Pakistan is primarily due to carbon emissions emanating from fossil fuels such as coal-burning used in the industrial sector and thermal power plants located in northern India. Further, in a related report, BBC (2019) highlighted that NASA satellite has captured high levels of fire on the Indian side. This is reinforced by a Rand report (2019) underlining that "the October–November post monsoon burning mostly occurs in India's Punjab State." In turn, this contributes to winter smog in Lahore and has severe health and socio-economic implications such as the disruption of air traffic and road transportation and "exacerbation of asthma, allergies, eye infections, respiratory tract infections, and cardiac pathologies leading to premature death."

The government of Pakistan has adopted a gradual approach towards climate change by taking several policy initiatives. One, by 2030 Pakistan aims to shift to 60% of renewable energy resources, banning coal imports and transferring 30% of vehicles to electric mode. Due to a combination of initiatives by the government of Pakistan such as nature-based solutions, energy efficiency, economic growth alongside implications of Covid-19, there is a reduction in emissions "of 8.7% emissions between 2016 and 2021." For instance, 1.5 billion trees have been planted in Pakistan and it is expected that 3.2 billion trees would be planted by 2023, and lastly, 10 billion trees are to be planted by 2028. Importantly, as part of Pakistan's efforts to achieve climate-sensitive economic growth and development, two proposed 2400 MW coal power facilities under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have been shelved. As a result, Pakistan has switched to a hydropower project of 3,700 MW under the China- Pakistan-Green-Economic Corridor. Other initiatives taken by the government of Pakistan include the Eco-System Restoration Initiative, Protected Areas Initiative and Clean Green Pakistan Index.

In addition, climate finance is a central strategy for Pakistan as it "intends to set a cumulative ambitious conditional target of overall 50% reduction of its projected emissions by 2030, with 15% from the country's own resources and 35% subject to provision of international grant finance that would require USD 101 billion just for energy transition." However, due to structural constraints mainly disbursement of international climate financing, Pakistan does face challenges for sustainable and clean development. It remains vital for Pakistani Policymakers

to navigate through global climate-related developments, as according to the World Bank execution of such policies is not a simplistic task. This is because the domestic political economy has pre-existing structures that link to “energy and transport systems, construction, and industrial and food production.” Despite the structural constraints, Pakistan at COP25 secured six positions under the UNFCCC for various committees hence, showing promise for climate change mitigation.

Furthermore, while the fiscal space is restraint in Pakistan alongside hurdles of global climate finance disbursement, domestic strategies such as public-private partnership (PPP) and zero-emission clean energy projects such as nuclear, wind and solar must be central for sustainable development. Although there is a need for implementing pledges of COP26, overambitious strategies at the domestic level may result in policy hurdles. A logical path would be to examine energy transition in phases through consultations with the environmental and climate technocrats.

India’s Pegasus-Gate

By Associate Director Research Dr Saba Sahar published in Pakistan Observer on 7 April 2022

Gabriel Garcia Marquez famously told his biographer, “Everyone has three lives: a public life, a private life, and a secret life.” It seems that Mr. Modi governs India by this dictum.

According to a 28 January 2022 New York Times report titled “The Battle for the World’s Most Powerful Cyber Weapon”, the Modi government acquired Pegasus software, as part of a USD two billion weapons deal from Israel in 2017. Pegasus is a hacking software that can turn a phone into a 24/7 spying device. The malware has ability to infect iPhones and Android devices, extract messages, photos, emails, record calls and secretly activate microphones. Unauthorized surveillance in a democracy is an infringement of the privacy and fundamental rights of the citizens. The use of weapons-grade spyware against its own citizens is a blot on India’s democratic credentials. The Modi government has lied to the Indian public and has misled state institutions, including the Indian Supreme Court and Parliament.

These fresh revelations have sparked a political storm in New Delhi. The opposition has been up in arms after the publication of the NYT report and has demanded that the Modi government clarify the official position on the purchase of such surveillance technology in the Lok Sabha. Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet on 29 January 2022, has proclaimed that “Modi Government bought Pegasus to spy on our primary democratic institutions, politicians, and public. Govt functionaries, opposition leaders, armed forces, judiciary all were targeted by these phone tapings. This is treason. Modi Govt has committed treason”. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs denied any purchase of Israeli spyware back in 2019 and a similar denial was issued by IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who in 2021 had called the allegations a “sensational” attempt “to malign Indian democracy and its well-established institutions.”

After the publication of the NYT report, Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury demanded that “a privilege motion be initiated against the Minister of Information Technology for deliberately misleading the House on the Pegasus issue.” More recently, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi, denied having any information on the Pegasus deal. While responding to a barrage of media questions, he dodged and deflected by stating that ‘the matter is now under investigation by a committee set up by the Supreme Court’.

Israeli reporter Ronen Bergman, who helped break the Pegasus story, has claimed that India violated the ‘End Use Agreement’ that it signed with the Israeli Ministry of Defence. The agreement stipulated that Pegasus could only be used against terrorists and organized crime.

The Indian media outlet 'The Wire' reported in 2021 that around 160 Indians including politicians, opposition leaders, journalists, dissidents, industrialists, and human rights activists were spied on using Pegasus malware. The list also includes high-profile targets in Pakistan, and the head of the Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq.

This pattern of deception and deceit seems to be an integral part of Indian State policy: Canada-India Reactor Utility Services (CIRUS), a research reactor supplied by Canada to India in 1954 for peaceful purposes was used to produce weapons-grade plutonium for India's 1974 Pokhran-1 codenamed 'Smiling Buddha' nuclear test. Similarly, India in an agreement with Pakistan in 1992 declared that it did not possess any chemical weapons but later signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993 as a possessor state. Likewise, Indian claims of 'surgical strikes' within Pakistani territory have been exposed as duplicitous and spurious. Furthermore, it has been documented that Pulwama was a false-flag operation conducted to bolster BJP's electoral prospects in Indian general elections of 2019.

The report from the Brussels-based EU DisinfoLab in Dec 2020 further illustrates how India engages in a disinformation campaign against Pakistan. A vast network of 265 coordinated fake local media outlets was used to plant fake stories that aimed to damage Pakistan's reputation and standing internationally. This intricate web of fake blogs and journalists was exposed as part of the investigation report entitled 'Indian Chronicles'.

Pegasus is also employed by countries as a tool of cyber warfare. In 2019, WhatsApp filed a lawsuit in a US court against NSO Group, an Israeli surveillance company, holding it responsible for a series of highly sophisticated cyberattacks. Sabotage and espionage are tools of cyber warfare. India has been using these techniques against both Pakistan and China. According to a June 2021 report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) titled, "Cyber Capabilities and National Power: A Net Assessment", public statements by Indian officials and other open-source material indicate that India has developed relatively advanced offensive cyber capabilities focused on Pakistan. The Indian Joint Doctrine of 2017 has identified cyber warfare as a component of hybrid warfare, which it described as a key element in the 'current fifth-generation war'.

Nation-states are increasingly interpreting cyberattacks on their critical infrastructure as equivalent to a physical attack. For instance, the United States in its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) declared that cyberattacks on critical infrastructure will constitute a "non-nuclear strategic attack" and evoke a serious response of "sufficient magnitude to justify the use of a nuclear weapon". Pakistan's cyber security policy announced in 2021 incorporates the element of cyber deterrence. It declares that 'a cyberattack on any institution of Pakistan will be considered as an act of aggression against national sovereignty and the state will defend itself with appropriate response measures.

India, therefore, has to be mindful that its misplaced zeal to harm its nuclear neighbours through cyber warfare could evoke a response it might not have imagined. The Pegasus-Gate has demonstrated that the incumbent Hindu nationalist government in India uses similar tactics against its own political opponents and government functionaries as against its nuclear neighbours.

Establishing Deterrence in Cyberspace

By Research Officer Areesha Anwer published in The Express Tribune 9 April 2022

According to the Identity Theft Resource Centre (2021), the total number of data breaches in 2021 was 1,291 as compared to 1,108 in 2020. Cybersecurity experts estimate that global cybercrimes would cost \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025. This requires states to adopt robust and efficient strategies and maintain effective deterrence to mitigate cyber-related threats.

The threat of cyber Pearl Harbor can be traced back to the World Wide Web's (www) prominence since the 1990s. Sean Lawson and Michael K Middleton (2019) explain cyber Pearl Harbor as "catastrophic physical impacts from cyberattacks on critical infrastructure". Terminologies such as cyberwars, cyberattacks, and cyber-intrusions have penetrated into the discourse of state security as they threaten countries with novel aspects of warfare. Having said that, a cyber-Pearl Harbor as of yet remains hypothetical. However, low-stakes cyber-operations involving state- and non-state actors, as well as high-stakes cyber-operations among big powers, are carried out frequently.

Pakistan ranks 79th in the Global Cybersecurity Index. However, in the global trend of cyberattacks, Pakistan is no exception. For instance, some recent major cyber-incidents in Pakistan have been directed toward banking and energy infrastructures. These include K-Electric, Federal Board of Revenue, and National Bank of Pakistan. Moreover, the intercept in 2016 reported that Pakistan's senior civilian and security officials have remained a constant target of cyber-espionage by the US National Security Agency (NSA). It was also reported by ISPR in 2020 that Indian intelligence agencies were involved in cybercrimes against government officials and military personnel in Pakistan. In the same context, a 2021 report by Amnesty International highlighted that Pegasus spyware was used by India against Pakistan. A related article published in November last year highlighted how a hacker group based in India launched cyberattacks on government and security departments in Pakistan and China.

Pakistan's National Cybersecurity Policy 2021 mentions taking retaliatory measures in case of aggression on Pakistan's critical infrastructure. Its objective states, "[It] will regard a cyberattack on Pakistan CI/ CII as an act of aggression against national sovereignty and will defend itself with appropriate response measures." However, the deterrence mechanism mainly followed by the policy is deterrence by denial – denying any benefit to the attacker. This does not maintain complete cyber-deterrence. An asymmetric cyberattack may require adequate defence, but to deter a large-scale symmetric cyberattack, cyber-defence coupled with non-cyber means of retaliation would maintain an effective deterrence. Hence, states have incorporated retaliatory measures in their cybersecurity policies and nuclear doctrines. For instance, the US Department of Defense 2018 Cyber Strategy is offensive in nature and states the development of a lethal joint force for countering malicious cyber-actors.

According to a recent statement by Pakistan's leadership, Pakistan's IT exports are expected to reach \$50 billion within the next few years. This is certainly a path to a resilient digital infrastructure. However, to defend the cyber frontiers, earnest implementation of the cyber security policy will be helpful in deterring cyberattacks. Maintaining deterrence in cyberspace is an uphill climb, yet not impossible. Strong cybersecurity infrastructure is integral to minimising cyber-vulnerabilities. Alongside policy implementation and strengthening the regulatory mechanism, further investments in emerging technologies must be made. This will help augment cyber-defence, create an effective deterrence posture, and enhance the indigenous cyber-capability of Pakistan.

Balakot crisis: sifting myths from reality

By Director Research Zahid ul Hassan published in The Express Tribune on 27 February 2023



The writer is Director Research Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh

India has a history of launching aggression against Pakistan on the pretext of false-flag operations for which incidents of Indian Parliament (Dec 2001), Bombay (Nov 2008) and Uri (Sept 2016) are the cases in point. In continuity of the same pattern, on 26 February 2019, shortly after midnight under overcast conditions, Indian Air Force (IAF) undertook a failed air strike inside Pakistan from across the Line of Control (LoC). It was a failed attempt, as IAF had to hurriedly release their munitions off-target and return, fearing Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles from Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Interceptor aircraft. Before even the dust could settle, Indian media went berserk and hysterical to claim that IAF had carried out “surgical strikes” inside Pakistan, targeting an alleged training camp and killed 300 inmates.

Conversely, to their dismay, dawn of the day revealed that IAF had dispensed expensive munitions by employing a barrage of high-tech 4th Generation platforms, duly supported by state-of-the-art force multipliers and ended up destroying a few pine trees and killing an innocent crowd.

For the Indian strategists, it appeared to be the culminating point of post-Pulwama media hype, saber-rattling and political trumpeting and believed to have achieved numerous politico-military objectives, including, but not limited to, the following:

Gain political mileage by launching direct attack against Pakistan for electoral gains; look for space for Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) under the nuclear overhang; signal to her foreign apologists that their politico-military and economic investments in India were in line with India’s role as the Net Security Provider; and take undue advantage of India’s so-called geo-economic relevance and set a new normal.

Ironically, it was the first-ever direct military attack by a nuclear country against another nuclear country. It was a case of gross miscalculations about Pakistan’s capabilities and resolve to respond, wrongly conceived geo-political realities and in fact, an attempt to jeopardise strategic stability of the region, which was established subsequent to nuclearisation of both countries in May 1998.

Nevertheless, Pakistan took the Indian act of aggression as violation of the UN Charter with a right to respond at the time and place of her choosing. The events, unfolding the very next day, not only proved embarrassingly consequential for the Indian political and military leadership but also largely revealed Indian inability to act as the Regional Policemen.

On 27 February 2019, Pakistan responded with a “Quid-Pro-Quo Plus” strategy, re-established deterrence and restored strategic stability of the region. Here it seems imperative to quantitatively qualify the “Plus” factors which include:

Expressing Pakistan's resolve to translate capabilities into a befitting response during broad daylight hours instead of darkness of mid-night; targeting military targets inside IIOJK and sparing them at the last moment, supported by corresponding videos of dispensed munitions; exhibiting capability to precisely engage multiple targets simultaneously through indigenously developed long range stand-off weapons; bombing targets while staying well inside own territory and not violating the LoC; displaying PAF's synergetic Air Operations through a web of indigenously developed integrated decision-making tools and fully automated command and control centres; shooting down of two IAF's frontline fighter aircraft while incurring no loss to PAF; presenting wreckage of the destroyed aircraft and captured IAF pilot to the international media; inducing paralysis and fog of war through force-multipliers that resulted in IAF shooting down their own helicopter; exercising strategic restraint through measured response while the possibilities to inflict more damage existed in air battle; and planning and conducting the entire range of PAF's air operations with exemplary professionalism by the combat elements and force multipliers and not letting the fog of war to set-in.

Also, Pakistan exhibited remarkable moral ascendancy and set the captured Indian pilot free as a good will gesture and testimony to being a peace-loving country.

In essence, India felt deeply humiliated, exhibited irrationally-rational behaviour and tried to up the ante by jumping numerous rungs up the escalation ladder and started contemplating the unconventional measures. However, Pakistan's resolve to once again respond with "Quid-Pro-Quo Plus" strategy and timely diplomatic intervention by the big powers — as mentioned by former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his book, *Never Give an Inch: Fighting for the America I Love* — successfully prevented the doomsday.

Another aspect of the Balakot crisis that merits due mention rests in information and perception management domains. Three distinct target audiences may be identified, in this regard — international, domestic and Pakistani.

On the international front, Indian strategy met a miserable failure and lost credibility on three accounts. First, the Indian claim of killing 300 persons at Balakot could not be verified by the independent media. Second, her claim of shooting down an F-16 of PAF by Wg Cdr Abhinandan was refuted by General Dynamic's by issuing an official count of Pakistan's inventory. This Indian claim was also nullified when Pakistan presented wreckage of the downed Mig-21 to the world that showed all four air-to-air missiles intact with the fateful aircraft.

Nevertheless, for her domestic audience, in order to give credence to the false claims, India had to confer Vir Chakra, the second highest Indian Gallantry award, on Wg Cdr Abhinandan — something that became a laughing stock within India and beyond.

On Pakistan's front, the Indian move proved counterproductive as not only all decisions were taken with collective wisdom by the entire leadership but it also gelled the entire nation into one entity that resolutely stood behind their armed forces.

To conclude, it can be summarised that it was a failed Indian attempt to disturb strategic stability of the region as a result of misperceptions and miscalculations about Pakistan's capabilities and resolve and misadventure on the part of the Indian leadership. The world community needs to review its geo-economic preferences in favour of geo-political realities and stop viewing India through the lens of trade destination. It is with this contextual background that the world powers need to view the Balakot strike as an irresponsible act of Indian leadership which could have disastrous consequences for the South Asian region and for the world.

How China Sees the World: Insights from China's International Relations Scholars

Huiyun Feng, Kai He and Xiaojun Li, (Singapore, Palgrave MacMillan, 2019)

Reviewed by Research Officer Safia Malik published in Monthly Interaction Magazine in June 2022

China is emerging as a global power by focusing on geo-economics and geostrategic issues to lead the world. Beijing has extended its economic corridors which connect several parts of the world and is actively playing its role in the international political economy. To understand Chinese scholars' views about the Chinese perspective of the world, Huiyun Feng, Kai He and Xiaojun Li's book "How China Sees the World: Insights from China's International Relations Scholars" is interesting to read. The book presents the analysis of Chinese scholars synthesized through their writing and a survey. Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies (CCPSIS) conducted a survey in which they selected top five Chinese research Journals' publications published during 2014-2017 to assess the changes in the perception of Chinese scholars over time. Research articles published in: (i) Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies; (ii) World Economics and Politics; (iii) Contemporary International Relations; (iv) Foreign Affairs Review; and (v) China International Studies are analysed. The authors examined the views of scholars on key issues of Chinese foreign policy and China's interaction with the world. The book consists of two broader themes: (i) Chinese scholarship; and (ii) Global geostrategic developments. The authors have addressed these themes by dividing the study in five chapters.

Chapter 1, Taking Chinese IR Scholars Seriously: It mentions three strata in Chinese society which are: elites, sub-elites and masses. Elites are the policymakers, masses are common people and sub-elites are scholars, analysts and media groups. Authors drew a conclusion that analysts and intellectuals suggest as policy recommendations but the state is independent in deciding whether to follow those recommendations or not. Although it is intricate to define to what extent sub-elites can have impact on foreign policy because it is still unclear whether a state's decisions are influenced by public opinion or public opinion is manipulated by the state. However, authors agree that sub-elites help manage the masses-elite relationship as mediators. In this regard, their perspective matters in promoting a state's narrative among masses. Chapter II, On China's Power and the International Order: Is China a Challenger? It assesses China's rise as global power and its impact on international order. The optimistic view is that "China's rise is within the existing Liberal order, and that China is becoming more socialized into the international system" [page 21]. The pessimistic view argues that China's rise is a threat to the US hegemony falling into the "Thucydides Trap" where war is inevitable between both powers [page 21]. Chinese scholars have mentioned "Great 2" which suggests that the future international order will be bipolar where the US and China will dominate the two poles. Their conclusions are based on the arguments that the power gap between the two countries is gradually narrowing. In terms of soft power, majority of the survey respondents agreed that China will surpass the US through Made in China policy 2025, the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) and the expansion of its aid to developing countries. Scholars have proposed that China's GDP is the second largest but its GDP per capita ranked 80th in the world. Therefore, Beijing needs to work on enhancing its political and economic power.

Chapter III, On US-China Relations: Problems and Prospects, stresses the importance of US-China relations. Chinese scholars believe that Beijing's ties with Washington are complicated and problematic but are important one. The US involvement in the South China Sea, unconditional

support for Taiwan and facilitating the Japanese stance on Senkaku Island could further worsen the bilateral ties. The two countries can cooperate on nuclear balance, economic interdependence, socio-economic linkages and global climate change [page 63]. The scholars have adopted the Realist and Liberal approaches to observing the US-China ties. Realists scholars believe: (i) The US considers China as its strategic competitor, their clash would manifest in military, geopolitical and geo-economic spheres; (ii) The US has adopted mixed-strategy of engagement, containment, balancing and cooperation to counter China; and (iii) Tension and competition would create trust deficit in the US-China ties. Conversely, Liberals by holding optimistic approach have suggested that there are avenues of cooperation between the two on common interests in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. Cooperative measures would enhance confidence and ultimately both would avoid the way to war and conflict. Chapter IV, On Chinese Foreign Policy and International Relations: It focuses on China's foreign policy and its relations with other countries including Russia, Japan, India, North Korea, African Union, European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Latin American countries. Scholars signalled positive bilateral Russia-China ties while having a disquieting view of China Japan's possible conflict in the East China Sea. "Our survey analysis shows that most Chinese IR scholars are positive and satisfied about China's foreign policy practices in general with respect to bilateral relationship with Africa, Russia, the EU and Latin America but are less optimistic with respect to India and Japan" [page 94]. This Chapter also explores Deng Xiaoping's "keeping a-low-profile doctrine", survey respondents supported Deng's doctrine, while textual analysis suggested that there was another group of scholars who wanted a change in Deng's doctrine. This discrepancy shows that Chinese scholars hesitate to challenge official policies in their publications.

Chapter V, Understanding China's Rise Through the Eyes of Scholars and Beyond: The authors have given observations about China's rise. They concluded that both the US and China should cooperate if they intend to share leadership and prestige as well as cope with common challenges in the future such as poverty, climate change and pandemics. In addition, the US and China can coordinate in peaceful settlement of Iran and North Korea's nuclear weapons program. "Therefore, the United States should consider welcoming a rising China to share some of the burden and responsibilities of global governance that it has had to bear alone in the past" [page111]. Authors also suggested that "Beijing seems to have no choice but to continue deepening its economic openness and market-oriented reforms and further integrating itself into the world economy to offset the negative impact of the trade war" [page 109].

The book presents a focused view of Chinese scholars' perception about Beijing's foreign policy, China's understanding of the world and its position in the international system. The four-year (2014-2017) comprehensive opinion survey and textual analysis of Chinese publications provide an interesting perspective. The authors have used qualitative and quantitative research methods to carry out this study. The book lacks the background of historical explanation of Chinese foreign policy, but it provides a valuable analysis of changing international geopolitical and geo-economic landscape. The authors have factored in domestic variables which may contribute to the development of China's international relations. Moreover, it is interesting to note that while authors envisioned a bipolar world in the future, they also suggest a world order in which two powers would cooperate for the greater good of the international community. The study is helpful for academics, policymakers, practitioners and students who are interested in China's foreign policy.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Pitfalls and the Way Forward

Dr Huma Baqai and Dr Nausheen Wasi (Eds) (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021)

Reviewed by Research Officer Safia Malik published in Journal of Strategic and Security Analyses in Summer 2022

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia has gained more prominence after the withdrawal of the US military from Afghanistan. The country, once again, has gained importance, where regional and extra-regional powers are eager to play their role. On 30 August 2021, US-led NATO military forces withdrew from Afghanistan, and the Taliban became the official political face of the country. The US war in Afghanistan cost the lives of 240,000 Afghan people and 2,500 American soldiers and USD 2.3 trillion in military expenses. But, everything is not hunky-dory for the Taliban either. They are facing many challenges regarding their legitimacy, recognition, and humanitarian crisis in the country. Such is the authors' analysis in the book "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Pitfalls and the Way Forward." It comprises twelve chapters, including an introduction, Chronology of Afghanistan Conflict and Pakistan Afghanistan Relations 2001 to 2021, and a preface by Dr. Jochen Hippler, Country Director Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), and Pakistan. The book, in a broader context, addresses four themes: Pakistan Afghanistan relations, the peace process in Afghanistan, politics of proxies, and conflict management.

The contributions are well-researched and provide essential inputs to academics. Different chapters provide invaluable analysis of Afghan politics, governance, and Pakistan-Afghanistan relations on a micro and macro level. The introduction of book gives an overview of the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's return to power. The intellectual discourse observes Pakistan-Afghanistan relations through a historical perspective, economic potential, and integration. It also discusses proxy wars, border terrorism, the role of regional and extra-regional powers in the Afghan peace process, and sheds light on options for Pakistan based on crisis management and conflict resolution mechanism.

The first part of the book addresses the broader theme of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, which includes five chapters: (i) Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Emergence of the New Nation States and the Search of Identity by Hameed Hakimi and Zalmai Nishat; (ii) Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Towards a New Horizon by Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry; (iii) Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations by Bettina Robotka; (iv) Cultural, Religious and Economic Integration: Future of Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations by Ali Maisam Nazary; and (V) Pakistan Afghanistan Economic Relations: Basis for Cooperation by Vaqar Ahmed. It comprises contributions of scholars from Pakistan and Afghanistan, where authors from both sides have provided their perspectives on bilateral ties. Authors have analysed the bilateral ties through historical, economic, cultural, and religious perspectives. The historical conflict between both states has eroded their potential for growth and stability. Still, now available options are to intensify the cultural integration - pave the way for regional integration - and jointly hold the hands against radicalization. Ali Maisam Nazary argues, "A Strategic cooperative partnership between Afghanistan and Pakistan is the only win-win situation that can be achieved through cultural, religious, and economic integration and end the 74-year rift between the two states" [page 88].

Hameed Hakimi and Zalmai Nishat added Pakistan's security approach towards Afghanistan in the context of its experience of Indian aggression that often shapes Pak-Afghan relations. Authors have agreed that Kabul and Islamabad need a new approach towards their ties to benefit from changing global geopolitical and geo-economic order. Scholars from both states, especially Vaqar Ahmed, stressed engaging in TAPI, CASA-1000, and China's BRI project rather than in conflicts. Bettina Robotka argued that both states should throw away historical baggage and territorial nationalism. Robotka and Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry have proposed a win-win approach for both

states in a globalized and interconnected world where Pakistan and Afghanistan should engage with China, Iran, and Russia for their economic development. On the theme of Pak-Afghan peaceful ties under the crisis management and conflict resolution mechanisms, Moonis Ahmar proposed some valuable options in his chapter Conflict Management Mechanisms in Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations. He highlighted Pakistan's efforts for peace in Afghanistan and has outlined its positive role in conflict transformation.

The book deals with the peace process in Afghanistan in a very comprehensive manner that contains three chapters which include: (i) Afghanistan Peace Process: Missed Opportunities by Maleeha Lodhi; (ii) Afghanistan peace Talks: Envisioning a Political Settlement by Shabnum Nasimi; and (iii) Afghanistan peace process and Involvement of Outside Powers by Zahid Hussain. The authors stressed that both neighbors could take advantage of the presently unfolding discourse as a missed opportunity. Zahid Hussain factored in the stakes of China, Russia, Iran, and Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the Afghan peace process based on their security and economic perspectives. Maleeha Lodhi has highlighted Pakistan's stance on the peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis. She has adopted a scenario-based approach that emphasizes the possibilities of peace in Afghanistan after US withdrawal. The best scenario approach, according to Lodhi, is that the exit of foreign troops compels the war-weary Afghan parties to negotiate and ask for humanitarian assistance from the international community to save Afghanistan from economic collapse [page 160]. Furthermore, if war is prolonged in Afghanistan, that would have negative impacts on Pakistan.

Shabnam Nasimi has compared the Afghan peace process with the Bonn agreement of 2001. She argues that the Afghan peace process serves the interests of the Taliban while the Bonn agreement of 2001 served the interest of the US. She added that the international community has been raising an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned plan, but the Doha peace talk was not inclusive, were some elite decided the country's fate. She believed that the Doha agreement would have no impact if it lacked implementation from both parties. All three chapters have a debate on the peace process in Afghanistan, but none of them talks about efforts comprehensively made by Pakistan. Pakistan not only took measures for peace and stability in Afghanistan but also suffered due to the spillover effect of conflict in the neighbourhood.

Two chapters are dedicated to proxy politics between Pakistan and Afghanistan: (i) Proxy Politics – Working towards Dead End by Mushtaq Muhammad Rahim and (ii) Politics of Proxy Wars and Terrorism by Rahimullah Yusufzai. Muhammad Rahim has viewed Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in proxy politics as having mutually hurting agendas. He has drawn a biased view of Pak-Afghan relations by questioning the Durand Line. Afghan writer also alleged Pakistan for playing the double game by supporting the US in 2001 and backing Afghan jihad. He writes, “US used the country [Pakistan] routes for the US logistic and military supplies. However, covertly, Islamabad continued to pursue its proxy politics against the newly established government of Afghanistan. Pakistan offered sanctuaries to the Taliban, similar to the 1970s-80s along the Durand Line. It allowed them to re-launch militancy across Afghanistan” [page 127]. Author, by neglecting Pakistan's peace efforts in Afghanistan, conversely wrote, “The menace of extremism and radicalism used against Afghanistan has turned its face towards Pakistan” [page 129].

Whereas Pakistani writer Rahimullah Yusuf Zai in his chapter Politics of Proxy Wars and Terrorism, gave a brief analysis of proxy wars and outrightly rejected the Afghan perspective on them. He highlights that bilateral relations are dominated by Afghan grievances and Pakistan's sensitivities and securitization. He has cited several statements of Afghanistan's previous government's leaders bashing Pakistan, showing the depth of emotional animosity against Pakistan. Despite calling the Durand line border a line of hatred between two brothers by Afghan officials, Pakistan refrained from passing any reciprocal comments. Yusuf Zai was of the view that Pakistan funded the establishment of schools, hospitals, healthcare, roads, and various

faculties in universities in Afghanistan. Afghan officials ignored most of the developmental projects in Pakistan, and were not even officially inaugurated. Concerning security concerns, the Pakistani writer added, “Pakistani Taliban and their allies and Baloch separatists have been enabled to have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and plan attacks against Pakistan” [page 144]. Furthermore, the Indian RAW, in cooperation with the National Directorate of Security (NDS), supplied weapons to anti-Pakistan militant groups to destabilize Pakistan. Although the two authors hold contradictory views, both agree to take advantage of opportunities unfolding now and develop stable ties through regional integration and trade promotion.

A chapter on Governance, Nation-ness, and Nationality in Afghanistan by Omar Sharifi discusses the ethnic factor of Afghanistan “Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan were always open to cross-ethnic alliances and felt no obligatory solidarity with their co-ethnics at the national level. For them, politics was approached like an arranged marriage, not a love match, so practicalities were more important than primordial affiliations which are key to ethnic nationalism” [page 74]. The author pitches that, even before the invasion and interference of extra-regional powers, Afghanistan had failed to include all ethnic groups in the government. This geo-ethnic factor and less inclusive leadership of Afghanistan impacted its relationship with Islamabad.

The compilation is interesting to read and contains well researched chapters. The last chapter, Chronology of Afghanistan Conflict and Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations 2001 to 2021 by Wajahat Rehan, provides information in detail about developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in the past twenty years. The reader may find some information outdated and irrelevant, as it lacks updates about the post-US withdrawal scenario. Several chapters of the book were finalized before the Taliban took control of Kabul. However, the book provides a historical picture of Pak-Afghan relations from a broader perspective that is informative for historians, decision-makers, foreign policy experts, and peace and conflict studies students. While compiling the book, the editors have adopted a balanced approach by incorporating views from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

War Transformed: The Future of Twenty-First-Century Great Power Competition and Conflict

Mick Ryan, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2022)

Reviewed by Research Officer Safia Malik published in CISS Insight Journal of Strategic Studies in Summer 2022

Military historians and strategists have been writing on the subject of warfare since ancient times. Strategists and scholars generally focus on both tangible and intangible aspects of warfare. Tangible aspects are the number of troops, quality and quantity of weapons, technology and economic resources etc. Intangible aspects of war include willpower, strategic innovation and the idea of employment of weapons. Most scholars of war studies separate these two and focus on one of the two aspects of warfare, i.e. tangible or intangible. Some scholars consider technological advancement as the most important factor for victory in contemporary warfare. Many scholars referred to in the book have highlighted that Prussia (1806), Russia (1905) and Iraq (2003) lost the wars due to lack of technological advancement. But Mick Ryan’s book *War Transformed: The Future of Twenty-First Century Great Power Competition and Conflict* draws a different conclusion. He argues that both technological and cognitive factors are important for victory in war. Ryan is of the view that technological advancement and military revolutions, although critical, do not provide a decisive military advantage in a conflict. The strategy to combine

technological innovation with new ideas, new organizations and well trained and educated human resource will provide decisive advantage in 21st century warfare. The book consists of four chapters that focus on the debate on cognitive and technological aspects of armed conflicts along with solutions to overcome the challenges of modern warfare.

Chapter I examines the impact of industrial revolutions on technological transformation of warfare. The three industrial revolutions changed the nature of warfare, national war-fighting capacity and military organization. The first industrial revolution resulted in the invention of steamboat, the telegraph, railroads and nation's ability to produce weapons on mass-scale. This transformed the conduct of warfare by enhancing tactical and operational capabilities. The second industrial revolution provided the power of flight, internal combustion engine, wireless communications, radar and electrically powered factories and expansion of scientific knowledge that underpinned the transformation of military affairs. The third industrial revolution featured the birth and growth of the internet and space-based capabilities. According to Ryan, the world is moving towards the fourth industrial revolution backed by silicon-based artificial intelligence, biotechnology, energy weapons, quantum technology, hypersonic and robotic systems that are impacting geopolitics, demography, technology and climate. The author is of the view that if we are able to understand how these industrial revolutions have changed war-making capacity and military organizations, this knowledge can be applied to the emerging fourth industrial revolution.

After the first chapter the author moves on the assertion that war is a recurrent factor of human history, which is the ultimate expression of competition. Roman proverb, "If you want peace prepare for war", aptly expresses the significance of war in their strategic culture. Romans and Greeks considered war as an element of human existence and it would inevitably be part of human future according to Ryan. The author has outlined five main features of warfare: (i) war will remain a part of human affairs; (ii) human competition is a constant feature of the interplay of nations; (iii) military institutions along with their adaptive capacity of strategic advancement will exist to respond and achieve the outcomes of different situations; (iv) strategic culture of states will define the ways to protect the sovereignty of nations; and (v) surprise attack on the adversary will remain the significant element of 21st century warfare. The author has broadly explained the changes in 21st century warfare techniques and competition and is of the view that military power requires understanding of modern warfare techniques. However, states are applying a combination of modern and traditional techniques of warfare to attain their strategic objectives. In case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Moscow used ancient warfare techniques including: (i) the seizure of cities and geostrategic points; (ii) negotiations; (ii) conduct of psychological operations and information warfare along with modern warfare tools; (iv) unmanned systems; and (v) open-source intelligence capabilities including data mining, hacking, geolocation and other methods.

Ryan gives importance to emerging trends of 21st century warfare in which technological advancement along with human-machine integration will be the main pillar of warfare. The integrated thinking and action approach is the emerging trend of warfare where air, space and cyberspace have joined the old space of land and sea conflict. This indicates that in future wars states will need to act in all emerging competitive domains. Ryan concludes that changing nature of 21st century warfare has its impact on the ideas of leaders, people and new military institutions. The nations which nurture learning culture and invest in new ways of thinking and operating are more likely to succeed.

The author discusses the significance of ideas, institutions and military power in developing military effectiveness in modern times. For example, the US has the idea of multidomain warfare that was defined in 2018 in the document "The US Army in Multidomain Operations 2028". The document not only defines the convergence of capabilities in the physical, cyber and influence domains, but also discusses the importance to penetrate and disintegrate enemy's anti-access systems, and exploits the freedom of manoeuvre. China, on the other hand, follows a multidomain

warfare approach from its own perspective. The Chinese consider science, technology and innovation to be core ingredients in developing China's advantage in military domain. Beijing has three core approaches in dealing with problems of future warfare: (i) use of information and intelligentisation of warfare; (ii) use of kinetic and non-kinetic strikes against the enemy's operational system; and (iii) use of political warfare.

Ryan has used Millett and Murray's framework for the assessment of military effectiveness and applied that on 21st century warfare scenarios. The framework includes strategic, operational and tactical capacity of warring nations. Millett and Murray give more importance to strategic effectiveness than operational or tactical effectiveness because mistakes on operational and tactical levels can be corrected, but strategic mistakes may have lasting consequences. On strategic effectiveness, military institutions require an integrated approach which includes economic, political, cultural, information, diplomatic and other strategic goals, in order to achieve desired strategic objectives. The use of emerging technologies and trained manpower are among the main elements of contemporary warfare, where tools of information and strategic assessments can help to get an advantage or balance in intellectual competition domain. These operational concepts are adopted by China and Russia to counter the Western system – where they are weak.

The last chapter of the book explores the participation of effective and adaptive military personnel in military institutions in order to meet the 21st century warfare challenges. The author is of the view that military leaders are trained in institutions that help them to cope with emerging warfare challenges. Because of this adaptive approach, historically, military personnel have been able to use geography, time, technology and intellectual edge to gain military advantage against their adversary. Ryan stresses more on "intellectual edge" which he defines as "individual excellence and professional mastery to out-think and out-plan potential adversaries". This intellectual edge could be developed by the deployed forces, its education and training system, and its strategic planning institutions. Military personnel should be given the training to think, act and decide faster than their adversaries according to the author. The new model of military training and education system must operate by strategic design, new technologies, military and organization theory and enhanced networking. Military institutions should invest in their people for future warfare and competition.

The book is an insightful reading as it presents options and choices for military leaders in adopting an effective military strategy in 21st century warfare. Ryan's two conclusions (i) technological innovation, ideas, institutions and well-trained and educated people and (ii) combination of old and new technologies that would provide a decisive advantage to nations in any military conflict are drawn from his own professional military experience during his service as a Major General in the Australian army. The book also highlights contemporary issues of international politics including the US-China strategic competition and the Russia Ukraine war in drawing options for military effectiveness. The book may help the reader to better understand the evolution of strategic thought and the impact of military modernization on the overall strategic culture of nations. The primary audience of this book is current and future military leaders, and students of strategic and defence studies. Besides it has interesting information for military historians.

The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China

Kevin Rudd, (Public Affairs, New York, 2022)

Reviewed by Research Officer Anwer Ali published in Journal of Contemporary Studies in Summer 2022

The strategists and policymakers predict that the 2020s will be “the decade of living dangerously” due to the unfolding crisis in the relationship between the United States (US) and China. The former Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd (2007-2010 and 2013), in his book “The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China” terms it a “decisive decade” in the dynamics of changing balance of power between China and the US. Kevin Rudd is an admirer of Chinese classical civilization, economic achievements of the post-Mao era, and policies for lifting its population out of poverty. His writings simultaneously show deep affection for the American people. While admiring the US's unique culture of innovation, Rudd criticizes its domestic politics over voter suppression, unrestricted campaign financing, and corruption of the electoral redistricting system.

The book consists of seventeen chapters. It begins with an introductory section, “On the Danger of War,” which raises the question: Should the US and China find a way to coexist through a managed strategic competition? The modern bilateral relationship between China and the US is based on common economic self-interest. The human rights issue is a point of friction in their relationship. In this context, the author shares his personal experiences and explains how he raised human rights issues during his official visit to China while delivering a public lecture in the Chinese language at Peking University.

This book provides a history of mutual distrust between the two big powers. It explains Thucydides's Trap and its relevance to the US China relationship, the rise of President Xi Jinping, and his views about the United States. Their political and strategic perceptions fuel the deepening distrust between Beijing and Washington. The US does not believe in China's self-proclaimed “peaceful rise,” while China does not buy Washington's pretensions that it has no interest in containing China's rise. The US occupies a central position in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) strategic thinking as the only country that is capable of fundamentally disrupting China's national and global ambitions, including President Xi's dream of “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. The American strategic community believes that armed conflict or confrontation is inevitable between the US and China unless the latter changes its strategic direction.

Rudd claims that with the rapid modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's traditional belief that it is too weak to engage militarily against the US is fading away. Contemporary China is testing the limits of the US's defense commitments to its Asian allies, including Taiwan, the Philippines, and Japan. The influential leader Xi Jinping — who sits at the apex of the Chinese political system — has consigned the old Chinese maxim “Hide your strength; bide your time; never take the lead” to oblivion. As a result of changing character of its leadership, China is removing the mask of modesty and restraint.

The author further argues that President Xi Jinping's worldview is based on the following ten concentric circles of interest: (i) The centrality of Xi and CCP and the politics of staying permanently in power; (ii) Maintaining and securing national unity; (iii) Ensuring China's economic prosperity; (iv) Environmental sustainability; (v) Modernizing the Chinese military to project power throughout the world; (vi) Managing China's neighbouring states; (vii) Maximizing China's strategic depth in the Pacific; (viii) Projecting China's strategic, economic and diplomatic power westward across the Eurasian continent and the Indian Ocean through Belt and Road

Initiative; (ix) Increasing influence across the developing world; and (x) Changing the global US-dominated rules-based order. Beijing will seek an international order more conducive to China's ideological, political, and economic interests.

Kevin Rudd identifies the following three approaches that China has followed to change the nature of international order: (i) Growing its support across the developing world. (ii) Installing China-friendly candidates in international institutions. And (iii) Creating a network of multilateral institutions outside the United Nations (UN) and Bretton Woods system. The US military looked at China as a regional strategic adversary in the 1950s-1960s, a strategic collaborator against the Soviet Union in the 1970s-1980s, an emerging strategic competitor in the 2000s, and an adversary in the 2020s. Washington formally assesses PLA as a "peer competitor" in the East Asia region and a "long-term strategic competitor" around the world.

The author has noted the following areas of military competition between the two great powers: (i) Taiwan (ii) The South China Sea (iii) The East China Sea (iv) New security threats (Artificial Intelligence, space, and cyberspace). In the chapter *The Decade of Living Dangerously*, Kevin Rudd outlines ten potential scenarios based on different hypothetical assumptions regarding what is likely to happen in the US-China relationship in the future. One important scenario is presented as "America's Munich moment," in which China takes Taiwan by force amid a nominal US military response.

The *Avoidable War* encourages policymakers in the two countries to devise a joint strategic framework, i.e., "managed strategic competition" between US and China to avoid war. It is difficult but possible. The core prepositions of "managed strategic competition" outlined by the author are: (i) China and the US must develop irreducible strategic redlines to avoid miscalculation; (ii) Both countries should divert the burden of strategic rivalry into a competition that aims to deter armed conflict; and (iii) Washington and Beijing should continue to engage in strategic cooperation to achieve their national and global interests. Kevin Rudd suggests that both great powers need to consider similar procedures and mechanisms that the Soviet Union and the US established and followed after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The *Avoidable War* focuses excessively on President Xi Jinping's strategic thinking and core priorities. The book presents him as a "calculated risk taker" who seeks to fracture US alliances. However, as Rudd has not cited references in the book, the readers may face difficulties verifying his claims about Chinese President Xi Jinping and China's national and global ambitions.

India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-emptive Strikes, Power Projection and Escalation Dominance

Dr. Zulfiqar Khan and Dr. Zafar Khan, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

Reviewed by Research Officer Syeda Sabiha Mehreen Rizvi published in *Journal of Strategic and Security Analyses* in Winter 2022

The geopolitics of South Asia is primarily defined by continued friction between the two nuclear-armed states, Pakistan and India. Given India's relatively strong economy, massive arms build-up and its geostrategic convergence with the U.S., India holds an asymmetric advantage over Pakistan, and thus, the strategic stability of the region remains disturbed. The situation is further aggravated by India's temptation to conduct surgical strikes inside Pakistan's territory, its power

projection and attempts at escalation dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Owing to India's belligerent posture, Pakistan is compelled to take measures to restore the regional strategic balance. Despite the negligence of the international community, Pakistan has been voicing its concerns about the deteriorating geostrategic environment of South Asia. The book *India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-emptive Strikes, Power Projection and Escalation Dominance* by Dr Zulfqar Khan and Dr Zafar Khan is an effort in the same direction.

The first chapter introduces the book. It explains the rationale of the intellectual discourse, that is, to explore the prospects of Indian deterrent force posture in South Asia primarily under the essentials of the nuclear revolution. The chapter discusses and conceptualizes the regional implications of India's evolving military strategy and its induction of sophisticated technologies. The authors argue that despite a slender possibility of an all-out war, the security architecture of South Asia suffers destabilization due to India's evolving military strategies. The chapter also provides a brief summary of the subsequent chapters. Chapter two, *Theorizing the Essentials of Nuclear Revolution in South Asia*, applies nuclear revolution theory to the regional security dynamics of South Asia. The theory assumes that an assured secondstrike capability produces mutual vulnerabilities between the two nuclear rivals, making them cautious of pre-empting a war on each other. In this context, the South Asian nuclear rivals are mutually vulnerable to each other's attacks. The chapter focuses on the possibility of conflict between Pakistan and India in a nuclearized South Asia.

Chapter three, *Geostrategic Environment of South Asian Region*, discusses the geostrategic dynamics and power politics in South Asia affecting regional stability and increasing the probability of an armed conflict. Citing Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the authors stated that "India's self-perception as a great power is influencing the 'regional security complex' from bipolarity to unipolar hegemony" [Page 54]. Moreover, the US support to India to contain China provides India with geostrategic leverage to stretch even beyond its physical limits. All of these combined have the potential to be catastrophic for the regional geostrategic landscape. Chapter four, *India's Maritime Strategic Outreach in the Indian Ocean Region: Power Projection and Escalation Dominance*, investigates India's maritime strategies in the IOR, including its attempts at power projection and escalation dominance. India's desire to achieve "blue water naval capability" with its growing military size, economic strength and technological prowess, especially under the strategic partnership with the US, exacerbates the deteriorating strategic stability of the region. Although Pakistan is strategically thinking seaward to meet the emerging maritime challenges of the twenty-first century, the authors emphasized that Pakistan must overcome its challenges, particularly regarding security, economy and technology, to neutralize Indian dominance. Pakistan should also apply cutting-edge information technologies to counter the ongoing Indian 5th -generation warfare against Pakistan. Chapter five, *India's Doctrinal Restructuring: Posturing for a Punitive Counterforce Strategy*, discusses the restructuring of India's entire nuclear doctrinal architecture and its conventional escalation plan of a deliberate conventional war against Pakistan. The authors emphasize that the Indian notion of imposing a limited conventional war on Pakistan under its Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) and achieving escalation dominance without crossing India's perceived nuclear threshold of Pakistan is highly flawed and prone to miscalculations. This irresponsible approach by India can inflict unbearable damage to the South Asian region in any future war. As a response to India's military designs against Pakistan, the latter accordingly responded with a comprehensive Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) policy covering the complete threat spectrum at tactical, operational and strategic levels.

Chapter six, *India's Evolving Strategy for Ballistic Missile Development Programme for South Asia: Motivations and Challenges*, explains India's missile expansion programs, modernization of its conventional forces and its growing civilian nuclear arrangements with the assistance of the West and the international community's deliberate ignorance towards it. The chapter further

discusses a threefold framework of India's deterrent force posture posing security implications for the region: (i) India's short-range missiles deployed in proximity to Pakistan's border will act as a catalyst to India's pre-emptive strike temptation; (ii) India's intermediate-range missiles pose a greater threat of collateral damage because they can be launched from deep within Indian territory, hence can induce inaccuracies; and (iii) India's longer-range missiles whose range can be enhanced up to the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) level allow India to threaten China and other parts of the world [Page 187].

Chapter seven, *Conceptualizing India-Pakistan's Competing Military Strategies and Possibility of Conflict in South Asia*, reviews the possibility of conflict escalation by analyzing the competing military strategies of Pakistan and India. It discusses theories such as nuclear optimism, nuclear pessimism, stability-instability paradox, rationalirrational paradigm and mutual vulnerabilities that attempt to explain the implications of nuclear proliferation in South Asia. The chapter also elaborates on the strategic competition between Pakistan and India, explaining the consequences of the operationalization of India's CSD and Pakistan's effective countermeasures, such as the FSD policy. In this context, the authors suggest revisiting riskier strategies to promote confidence and stability in the region. Chapter eight, *India's Evolving Deterrent Posturing: Post-Pulwama Military Crisis 2019*, discusses India's continued ambitions for pursuing limited war against Pakistan, exposing the region to a potential risk of war and nuclear exchange as was the case in the post-Pulwama crisis. The chapter explains the defensive and offensive balancing strategies of the two nuclear-armed neighbors and Pakistan's measured response leading to de-escalation to prevent the intensification of military conflict. The authors emphasize that it is in the mutual interest of Pakistan and India to minimize the probability of conflict escalation.

Chapter nine, *Revisiting the Proposed Strategic Restraint Regime for the South Asian Region: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustaining Peace and Stability*, explains the unavoidability of limited conflicts between Pakistan and India and proposes to revisit Pakistan's Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) proposal to establish peace and stability. The chapter provides a four-way analysis of SRR ranging from unilateral to quadrilateral: (i) In the unilateral approach, any of the two nucleararmed neighbors may voluntarily reduce their number of deterrent forces; (ii) In the bilateral approach, the two countries may develop consensus to cut down the number of deterrent forces on both sides; (iii) At the trilateral level, China can be a potential part of SRR as it is presumed by the authors that India would always factor China into its strategic calculus; and (iv) At quadrilateral level, the US can play a part as a superpower given the global geostrategic dynamics is linking the South Asian nuclear rivals to the international nuclear architecture. The authors discussed that the unilateral and bilateral approaches appear to have limited significance due to Pakistan and India being locked in an acute security dilemma in a complex environment. Therefore, learning from the Cold War nuclear history, the authors opine that Pakistan and India have opportunities to establish Pakistan's proposed SRR with the support of China and the US. The step may contribute to constituting some form of restraint regime in the region in order to prevent the outbreak of serious crises with a tendency for conflict escalation.

Chapter ten, the concluding chapter, summarizes India's evolving deterrent force posture with its conventional military and strategic force modernization, its temptation for pre-emptive strikes, power projection and escalation dominance attempts. India's cooperation with its strategic partners, such as the US, Russia, Israel, France and other industrially advanced countries, is also highlighted. The authors have recommended confidence and security-building measures, such as refocusing on the Nuclear Confidence Building Measures to ensure regional and global peace and stability. The international community should also play its role in this regard. The authors have used a comprehensive approach in assessing the regional strategic environment and have made balanced recommendations. The book is a valuable intellectual contribution to the literature on deterrence and strategic stability in South Asia.

CISSS Paper Presentations

Nuclear Technology in Agriculture Response to Climate Change: Political Economy of Sindh

Paper presented by Dr Mohid Iftikhar, Farzana Wahid Buksh, Iraj Abid and Sumair Ayoob in National Conference on “**Integrating Climate Smart Agriculture, Water, Energy and Food Nexus for Sustainable Development and Food Security under Changing Climate**” on 19 and 20 August at Dawood University.

Abstract

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2021) notes that “Nuclear technology plays an important role in agriculture and food security, complementing conventional climate adaptation and climate science technologies.” In relation, scholars of political-economy need to understand how nuclear technology addresses Climate Change threats by improving agricultural productivity and farmers’ livelihood. By examining the case study of Sindh we explain that a robust institutional structure bolsters agriculture productivity and addresses Climate Change threats. This study employs an eclectic approach through on-ground insights and rich empirical data and contributes to the literature on the political economy of agriculture. Further, this study provides new insights to policymakers for increasing investments in the commercialization of nuclear technology in agriculture to address Climate Change challenges.

Keywords: Political Economy of Agriculture, Nuclear Technology, Institutions



Significance of Nuclear Energy in Pakistan's and Global Context

Research presented by Dr Mohid Iftikhar at Defense and Martyr's Day 2022 (September 6) organized by Pakistan Rangers (Sindh), DHA Suffa University, Greenwich University and Jinnah Medical University.

Abstract

Pakistan's nuclear program has brought peace and security to the region. Pakistan's response to nuclear energy came with the inception of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1956. The first nuclear power reactor KANUPP-1 became operational in 1971. Despite challenges, PAEC's institutional innovation and development has allowed the nuclear energy program to be a success in Pakistan. This is evident through investment in manpower, research and upholding high scientific norms. Social sciences research offers strong evidence between economic growth and nuclear energy. Today Pakistan's nuclear share in power generation through six nuclear power plants (NPPs) is 10-12% (estimates vary) from 1% in 1990s. It is found through rich empirical data that for Pakistan to become: (i) self-reliant; (ii) address climate related threats; (iii) absorb shocks from geopolitical conflicts; (iv) reduce dependence upon fossil fuels and; shift to electric vehicles by 2030, nuclear energy remains a promising choice as it is affordable, reliable and clean.

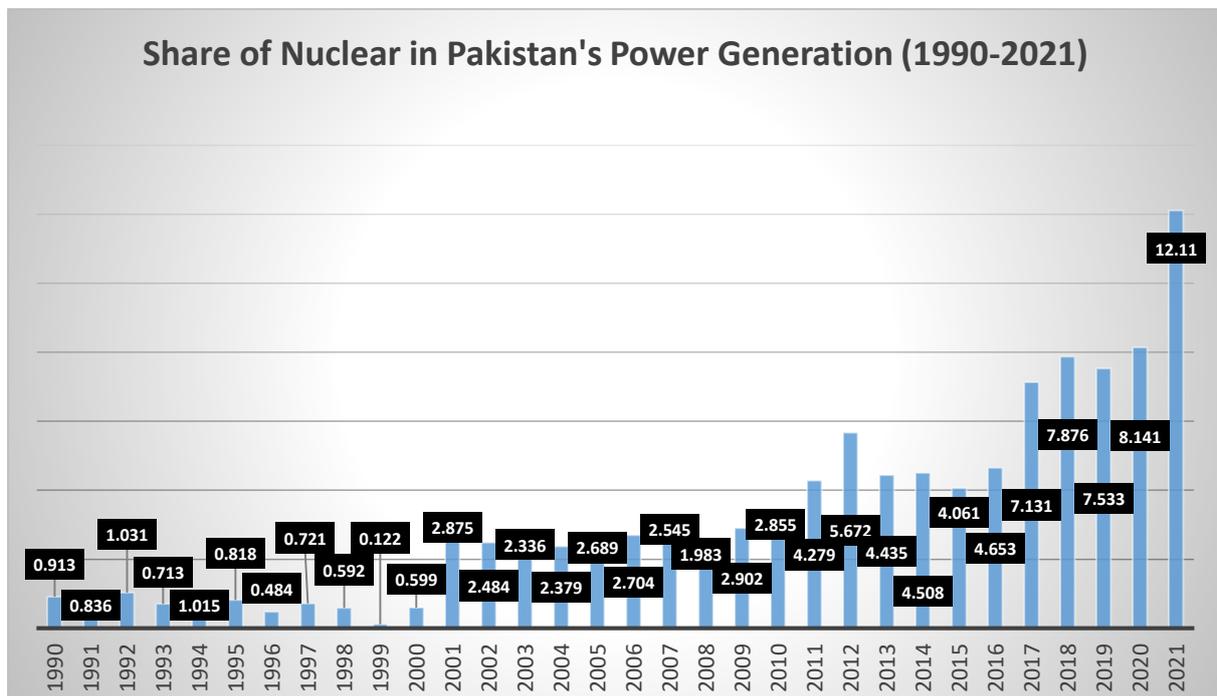


Figure 4: Source: Reproduced by author Our World in Data 2022

Cyber Warfare: A Threat to National Security

Dr. Saba Sahar¹ and Areesha Anwer² published in Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research (Vol. 4, Issue 1)

Abstract

The rise of emerging technologies and the growing use of internet has led to a more digitized world where cyberspace has become the new battleground for nations to compete with each other. Cyber-attacks comprise a range of assaults that can put at risk the critical infrastructure and thereby the national security of a state. Damage by cyber-attacks could be inflicted through cyber espionage, hacktivism, ransomware or cyber terrorism. Cyberspace has a significant effect on the instruments of national power such as diplomacy, economy, military prowess and control over information. Thus, it requires a ‘whole of nation approach’ at all levels to protect the physical and network security of critical infrastructure which is imperative for national security. Cyber-attacks have become a potent tool in the hands of both state and non- state actors because of their relative cost-effectiveness, difficulty of attribution, anonymity and ambiguous nature. The study comprehensively identifies the nature of cyber-attacks that endanger the national security of Pakistan. Furthermore, the paper examines the extent of the resilience of the cyber security policy of Pakistan in providing a robust mechanism to contend with the threat of cyber-attacks. This research also provides policy recommendations to enhance the cyber security infrastructure of Pakistan. This research is qualitative and both primary and secondary sources have been used to analyze the research topic.

Keywords: Emerging technologies, Cyberspace, Cyber security, National Critical Infrastructure

Introduction

In the modern age as states rely deeply on networks and digital infrastructure, the number of cyber-attacks has tripled over the last decade especially targeting the financial services industry.¹ Hostile elements seeking to derail information systems can breach cyber security and inflict physical damage on critical infrastructure.² In response, states require capabilities to recover from and avoid significant cyber risks including the setting of security standards, technical innovation, sector-specific risk management and the effectiveness of the indigenous cyber security industry. According to a Foreign Policy magazine survey cyber is the “single greatest emerging threat”.³

Cyber security has the potential to revolutionize our future including our national security as contemporary global communication and connectivity are becoming increasingly dependent on cyber technologies. Pakistan has already embarked upon this path of digital transformation under the slogan “Digital Pakistan.” To realize this digital transformation, Pakistan has taken several initiatives including formulating Pakistan’s Cyber Security Policy 2021 which attaches top priority to securing Pakistan’s cyberspace in its National Security Policy⁴. Pakistan is facing cyber-attacks against targeted individuals, organizations and the government and ranks 79 on the global cyber security index ranking 2020 in terms of measures taken⁵. Therefore, the “whole of a nation” approach is imperative to ensure robust cyberspace. This entails intelligence sharing and developing defensive and offensive cyber capabilities. It also includes innovative up skilling and education schemes and campaigns aimed at heightening public awareness.

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² Ms Areesha Anwer is Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS)

Cyber Deterrence

Deterrence theory was developed during the Cold war to address the challenges which emerged after the development of nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence was successful in keeping both United States and Soviet Union from engaging in direct conflict. Cyber deterrence should play a similar role in the digitalized world as it seeks to influence an adversary's behaviour by discouraging him from doing any unwanted activities. Hence, many states have embraced cyber deterrence as a driving policy position in addressing attacks in cyberspace.⁶

The existing cyber defence and offence capabilities of states still have gaps that prevent the full protection of cyberspace. Deterrence-by-denial denies the adversary state the incentive to carry out a cyber-offensive. Deterrence by denial, at its core, is the ability of a state to decrease the probability of network penetration to the degree that it either disincentives an attack or grinds an attacker to halt over time. Deterrence by denial strategies endeavours to improve cyber capabilities so that despite adversarial ventures, a cyber-attack might have a low rate of success. Deterrence-by-punishment threatens an adversary with costly consequences in an event of a cyber-attack.⁷

The Problem of Attribution

Cyber attribution refers to allocating the responsibility of an attack to an attacker or group of attackers and subsequently, unveiling their real-world identity.⁸ Attributing a cyber-attack to the perpetrator is a difficult task as the origin of the attack mostly remains unknown and leaves no physical evidence. Therefore, it is hard to distinguish the cyber assault, that originated from one country against the other was carried out by the state.⁹ Cyber-attacks can be masked as an attack by a state when in reality it could emerge from a non-state actor as well. Hence, it is difficult to decipher the origin of the cyber-attack and thus refrains from deterring the enemy. Joseph Nye describes deterrence by denial as an effective deterrence mechanism in cyberspace. The ambiguity surrounding attribution compels states to resort to deterrence through denial.¹⁰ Thus, deterrence by denial is a key question for policymakers. Maintaining robust cyber infrastructure can help become a shield against cyber-attacks from both states and non-state entities. It is to mention that this does not fully eliminate the possibility of cyber-attacks. It is hard to deter and punish the unseen enemy. Hitting back at the wrong target may worsen the situation and weaken deterrence.

This can further incentivize cyber terrorists to take advantage of the situation. Given the time required to recognize the origin of the attack, attribution becomes more challenging for states in the domain of cyberspace.¹¹

Offensive Cyber Capabilities

One of the increasing risks for cyber is enormous global digitization. A distinction between offence and defence is blurred in the complex domain of cyber security, mainly due to security paradox.¹² Offensive cyber capabilities are needed because of deterrence as areas of conflict in cyberspace are ambiguous, without a clear starting and ending point. Physical and cyber conflicts are intertwined and, therefore, cyber domains cannot be treated as different from physical ones. Cyber-attacks can subvert the target with catastrophic impacts on critical infrastructure. Resilient cyber capabilities help resist offences and circumvent the harm to other domains of security and critical areas.¹³

Further, opacity, asymmetry and attribution remain a problem in cyberspace. Military offensive cyber capabilities are designed surgically to bring down sophisticated critical civilian and military networks during an armed conflict. In addition, in the latest Cyber Strategy of the United States, the offensive cyber policy is strongly emphasized and it has been said in public that the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is focusing its research on offensive cyber capabilities. It has also been announced by many countries that a response to a cyber-attack is not limited to the cyber domain, which is understandable.

Cyber Attacks on Critical Infrastructure: An International Approach

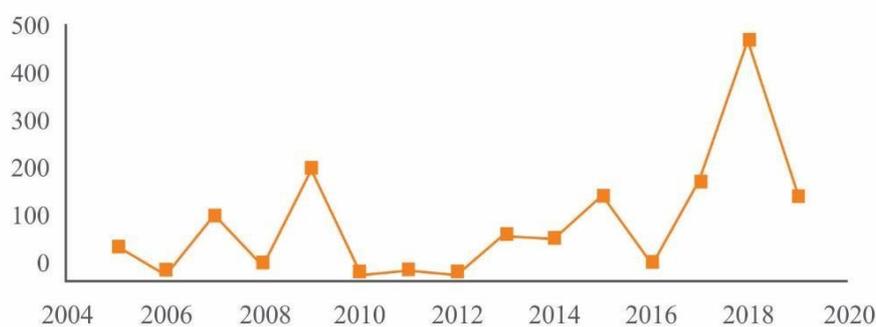
"Systems-of-systems" integrated with massive information and communications infrastructures exposes critical infrastructures to significant cyber threats".¹⁴ A cyber-attack

on the critical infrastructure of a state is a threat to its national security. In such a case, denial-by-defence will help counter cyber-attacks by both states as well as non-state actors more adequately. However, denial-by-punishment will be more effective to deter states solely as the threat of retaliation can deter the intention of an offensive cyber-attack.

The United States has been working on developing its cyber security policy since the 1990s focusing on countering cybercrime and preventing losses to the corporate sector. However, there has been a sharp and intensifying concern about protecting the country’s critical information infrastructure. A key component of the US 2018 cyber strategy is its Cyber Deterrence Initiative (CDI). This states that the US will work closely with allies in responding to cyber-attacks (including through intelligence-sharing), attributing attacks, formulating public statements of support for actions taken and jointly imposing consequences against those responsible.

Data at Risk

Attacks are exposing more data.
(millions of exposed records in the US)



Source: Identity theft resource center.

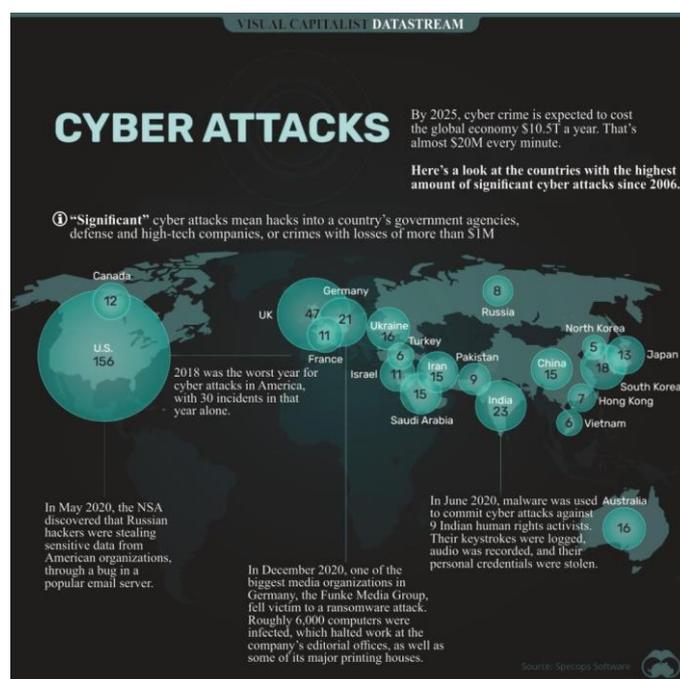
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

The figure shows an annual increase in cyber-attacks and data comprised during the mentioned period in the US.

Critical National Infrastructures (CNI) around the world are mostly controlled by private companies. Notably, the private sector controls roughly 90 percent of US critical infrastructure. The threat to critical infrastructure has raised a serious question in the world coalescing into the massive booming business of cyber security, one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. From 2006 to 2020, 156 significant attacks were made on the United States with an average of 11 significant attacks per year.

In 2014 President Xi Jinping initiated a wave of internet-related organizational reforms and new laws and regulations to make China a cyber-power.¹⁶ China’s first national Cyberspace Security Strategy was published in 2016 and was supported by China’s first Cyber security Law in 2017. On the industry side, the ‘Made in China 2025’ strategy, announced in 2015, is of particular significance. Identifying reliance on foreign vendors for its core internet technology as China’s biggest cyber risk, this ambitious strategy intended to ensure that 70% of the core internet technology the country depended on would be manufactured domestically by 2025 and that it would become a world leader in such technology by 2030.¹⁷ This is complemented by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in which the Digital Silk Road component is designed to open up markets in the developing world to Chinese technology.¹⁸

The United Kingdom's critical national infrastructure officially consists of 13 sectors which include Chemicals, Civil Nuclear, Communications, Defence, Emergency Services, Energy, Finance, Food, Government, Health, Space, Transport and Water. Each of these sectors is required by the government to produce an annual Sector Security and Resilience Plan, incorporating cyber security issues, while individual companies are responsible for their business continuity and resilience plans.¹⁹ There is a proven system for incident alerting and response, cyber defence exercises involving government and industry and a dedicated national risk register.²⁰ The UK Government's assessment of threats to Critical National Infrastructure (NCI) is based on a continuous cycle of learning lessons from real-world events.²¹



Source: Visual capitalist data stream <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cyber-attacks-worldwide-2006-2020/22>

The figure shows that the UK is the second-largest victim of significant cyber-attacks after the United States. It is estimated that by 2025 cybercrime is going to cost the global economy around \$10.5 trillion which is almost \$20 million every minute.²³

The UK government focuses on improving its resilience by strengthening the capabilities in cyberspace to withstand and recover from disruption. Its approach to security and resilience focuses on Resistance, Reliability, Redundancy and Response and Recovery. ²⁴

International Dialogue and Agreements on the Use of Cyber Capabilities Under UN Auspices

There are two parallel major UN-sponsored initiatives aimed at addressing the future of cyber security. First, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) operating under the auspices of the United Nations was formed in 2004. In period 2019-2021 GGE comprised of experts from 25 member states including five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It is working to promote responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.²⁵ Second, the Russian-sponsored Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) was established in 2018. It is tasked to examine the developments in the field of Information and Telecommunications in the context of international security.

To date, six working groups of GGE have been created and the core achievement has been the recognition that international law applies to cyberspace and the introduction of non-binding and voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour.²⁶ The more recent working group of GGE concluded its work in May 2021 by adopting a consensus report. The report recognized the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to cyberspace, precisely it acknowledges

that IHL applies to cyber operations during an armed conflict. The 2021 report stresses that “states need to take responsible steps within its capacity to end the ongoing activity in its territory through means that are proportionate, appropriate and effective and in a manner consistent with international and domestic law.”²⁷

Building on the 2015 GGE report, the latest report of 2021 expands on principles of international law that are relevant in cyberspace. It accelerates the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states. EU has emphasized that “the critical infrastructures are no longer confined to the borders of states, but are increasingly becoming transnational and interdependent,” GGE report highlighted the lack of protection and regulation of such infrastructure, linking this unsettled issue to capacity-building and calling for closer interstate and public-private cooperation.²⁸ Overall, GGE re-emerged as the main inclusive process for the application of international law to cyberspace and demonstrated progress from its previous rounds.

Unlike GGE, OEWG deliberated in public and member states could submit public contributions to its deliberations. In March 2021 OEWG passed the unanimous resolution and produced a report adopted by 68 participating states. This was the first report on cyber security of this scale with direct governmental participation. During the first round of OEWG, several countries emphasized the threat of misinformation and foreign interference in their electoral processes. Although, the report only gives a brief reference to the election interference to the underlying critical infrastructure.

In the first section, the report focuses on the rising number of hostile cyber operations which destabilize public services such as “medical facilities, financial services, energy, water, transportation and sanitation.” The second section deals with rules, norms and principles. It recommends the development and implementation of norms of responsible state behaviour and the exchange of best practices for the protection of critical infrastructure. The third portion backs the GGE statement that international law including the UN charter applies to cyberspace. The fourth portion of the report says the confidence-building measure (CBMs) are policy tools aimed at mitigating threats and building trust & communication channels and have been traditionally promoted in tackling international security issues such as nuclear non-proliferation or disarmament. The fifth section identifies CBMs to develop trust while capacity building is also the focus of the report outline. Finally, the report identifies the importance of regular institutional dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations.²⁹

Currently, OEWG is working on a second mandate 2021-2025 with an organizational session held in June 2021. The first substantive session of OEWG was held in December 2021 followed by the second substantive session held from 28 March to 1 April 2022 in New York.³⁰ The OEWG group discussed the existing and potential threats in the ICT sphere and data security rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of states in cyberspace. It also addressed the question of how international law applies to the use of ICTs by states, confidence-building measures and capacity building. The next OEWG substantive session will be held on 25-29 July 2022.³¹

It is to note that despite the wide mandate given to each group – the GGE and OEWG – by the UNGA resolutions that establish them, both reports reveal a cautious approach. They mainly focus on voluntary, non- controversial issues such as encouraging states to enhance their cooperation in capacity building and Confidence Building Measures (CBM) to meet the challenges in tackling existing and potential threats.

Cyber terrorism refers to "premeditated, politically motivated attacks by sub-national groups or clandestine agents against information, computer systems, computer programs and data that result in violence against non- combatant targets"³²

In 2002, the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies defined cyber terrorism as “the use of computer network tools to shut down critical national infrastructure (such as energy, transportation, government operations) or to coerce or intimidate a government or civilian

population”.³³

Cyber terrorism is a more attractive and cheaper method for terrorists than traditional methods because they do not need to invest money and buy weapons. Additionally, compared to conventional forms of terrorism, cyber terrorism needs less physical preparation, fewer mortality risks and greater mobility, making it more appealing for terrorist groups to attract and keep adherents.

Cyber terrorists break into computers that control dams or air traffic control systems, wreaking havoc and endangering not only millions of lives but national security itself. ³⁴

It ought to be mentioned that, most of the critical infrastructure of Western countries is networked through computers. Therefore, mostly electric power grids and emergency services are vulnerable to cyber terrorist attacks because computer systems that run them are highly complex, making it effectively impossible to eliminate all weaknesses. One such example is the Tamil Tiger Guerrilla fighter’s attack on the computer systems of the Sri Lankan State in 1998. The Sri Lankan embassies around the world were flooded with the message that “We are the Black Internet Tigers and we are going to disrupt your communications systems.” Similarly, in 2003, a Japanese cult named Aum Shinrikyo (“Supreme Truth”) conducted a complex cyber-attack including obtaining sensitive information about nuclear facilities in Russia, Ukraine, Japan and other countries as part of an attempt to attack the information security systems of these facilities.³⁵

Cyber Espionage

Cyber espionage can be described as a method of intelligence collection, particularly to obtain or access information that is not normally publicly available. The techniques of cyber espionage include using human resources (agents) and technical means by hacking into computer systems.³⁶

A pitfall attached to taking retaliatory measures in cyberspace is the problem of attribution. Cyber-attacks carried out by state A maybe retaliated by state B if the origin of the attack is known. However, a cyber-attack by non-state actors can not necessarily be traced back to its attribution. Pakistan has also remained a target of cyber espionage. The Intercept 2016 Report states that US National Security Agency NSA spied on the top officials of Pakistan through Second date malware.

Since cyber espionage is carried out for spying and collecting intelligence such tactics are usually carried out by states hence the chances are that the cyber offender is a state actor and the likelihood of tracing the origin of such an attack is possible in some cases. To deter cyber espionage, offensive policy measures should be adopted. This will increase the response mechanism and will deter the possible cyber-attacks faced by Pakistan.

Hacktivism

There is no universal definition of hacktivism but it has been described as the intentional access to systems, websites and/or data without authorization. The techniques also include the signing of online petitions, hashtag campaigns, creating a campaign website, recruiting volunteers and obtaining funds from members and supporters.³⁷

Hacktivism has entered mainstream social media such as Twitter and Instagram. Protected by their anonymity, hacktivists can be less inhibited in expressing ideas or abuse and can be much more impervious to criticism and debate, than people who hold similar beliefs but express and defend them publicly. In short, hacktivism can appear more shadowy work of fringe groups and outsiders, than traditional forms of activism.³⁸Anti-state elements often use such techniques to malign the other state. For example, the use of fake hashtags against Pakistan; #statekilledKarimabaloch #statekilledusmankakar and the migration campaign that India ran against Pakistan through the srivasta group.

Ransomware

Ransomware is a type of malware and malicious software, used to commit cybercrimes. When a computer or a network is attacked with ransomware, the malicious software blocks access to the system and encrypts its data. Thus, cybercriminals demand ransom money from the victims

of cyber- attacks to release their data. In terms of national security, ransomware attacks are a red line for the states, because they can block the critical data of important national institutions and the blocked data could be used against the victim state. 39

One of the significant ransomware attacks on the United States was witnessed in May 2021 when the hackers took down the Colonial Pipeline which led to fuel shortages across the East Coast. Charles Carmakal, senior vice president at cyber security firm Mandiant said in an interview that the Colonial Pipeline was hacked by a private network account which allowed the hackers to remotely access the company's computer networks. According to a Bloomberg report, the Colonial Pipeline transports almost million barrels of oil daily from the Gulf Coast to the Eastern Seaboard. The ransomware attack resulted in a blockade of the gas stations and higher fuel prices.⁴⁰

Cyber-attacks on Pakistan

With the expansion of cyberspace in the sectors of finance and energy, the threat of cyber-attacks has increased noticeably. Reportedly Pakistan's finance and energy sectors were the frequent targets of cyber-attacks.⁴¹ Since cybercrimes are a risk to systematic financial stability, the attacks on the critical infrastructure of any state are a matter of its national security. It is important to note that cyber-attacks taking place in one country/organization or a company can have repercussions worldwide. For example, a cyber-attack hit Careem app in 2018 that resulted in a compromise of information of 14 million users from several countries. Consequently, information such as email address, trip details, customer identity and phone numbers became a target.⁴²

National Cyber Security Policy of Pakistan 2021

In July 2021, the federal cabinet of Pakistan approved the first National Cyber Security Policy of Pakistan. The policy emphasizes the development of a response framework to deal with the threats of cyber terrorism and cyber-attacks. It further elaborates on a national cyber vision to have a protected, robust and enhanced nationwide digital ecosystem for national security and socio-economic progress.⁴³ Further, the policy mentions the development of an integrated digital eco-system to protect the crucial digital assets of states. The policy envisions active defence against cyber-attacks and internet-based services as well as adequate response measures in case of acts of aggression against national sovereignty⁴⁴.

Following are the focus areas of Cyber security policy of Pakistan 2021:

Establish a governance framework

Address the importance of information systems and critical infrastructure

Promote data governance and protection

Promote online privacy

Establish an information assurance framework

Create cyber security awareness

Capacity building

Achieve independence/indigenization

Emphasize the national/global cooperation framework

Emphasize the adoption of a risk-based approach⁴⁵

In essence, Cyber Security policy 2021 is aimed at protecting the cyberspace of Pakistan by developing a robust cyber security defence. The policy places cyber-attacks at par with attacks on the core aspects of national security. However, policy mainly focuses on defensive approach which is also imperative for securing cyberspace but it should also adopt an offensive approach to deterring cyber-attacks. It ought to be mentioned that this kind of approach cannot be considered a panacea against cyber-attacks. The policy measures, therefore, should be a blend of both offence and defence to comprehend cyber threats.

The Resilience of the National Cyber Security Policy of Pakistan 2021 The 2021 cyber policy mentions establishing a structure to safeguard the cyberspace of Pakistan. It is a positive step towards the security of cyberspace. The policy states that an interactive digital ecosystem will be developed to safeguard digital assets from cyber-attacks. Moreover, special courts will be

established at the national level to resolve cybercrime matters. One of the principal rules of cyber security is safeguarding the Critical Infrastructure (CI) and Critical Information Infrastructure (CII). The policy document maintains enforcement of cyber security risk management methodologies, developing a mechanism for the protection of CII and enforcement of the use of digital certifications and their accreditation including accreditation of national security standards in developing national security standards for public and private sectors.⁴⁶

This establishes that the policy is indeed resilient as it comprehensively covers the existing and possible cyber threats to the CI and CII of Pakistan. In addition to that, the policy covers domestic cyber threats like cybercrimes as well. The number of existing and possible cyber threats to the digital infrastructure of Pakistan is not small. Cyber-attacks in the past were carried out by both states as well as non-state actors. Ransomware, malware, hacktivism, cyber espionage, cyber terrorism and other cyber-attacks have also affected Pakistan. This necessitates vigilance in all areas of the policy. The policy mechanism should not only follow defensive, but rather a combination of defensive and offensive approaches to better contend with the threats of cyber-attacks. The National Security Policy of Pakistan (NSP) 2022-2026 was officially released on January 14, 2022. The NSP highlights present and future threats faced by Pakistan in its neighbourhood and emphasizes the “whole-of-a-nation” approach to deal with these threats at all levels including land, air, sea, cyber and space.⁴⁷ It is imperative to note that policy measures must be implemented in their earnest to achieve the desired policy goals. Likewise, the framework given in the National Cyber Security Policy requires prompt implementation given the sharp rise in cyber-attacks and cybercrimes in Pakistan and all over the world. Investments must be made in the ICT sector and emerging technologies to enhance the digital infrastructure of Pakistan, which will serve as a barrier to cyber-attacks.

The National Cyber Security Policy 2021 must be updated with the relevance of time and technological advancement and an accountability mechanism must be put in place to monitor the development and goals achieved in the given time.

A whole-of-Government Approach – including diverse ministries, public agencies and public administration, must be taken, to not only provide a common solution to a problem but also work to implement those solutions at the national level. National vulnerability assessment centres and national crime and coordination centres should be established and there should be a collaboration with the private sector and international cyber security research organizations. Cyber deterrence cannot be carried out by the government alone but with the assistance of the public too. Civilians are on the front lines of cyber warfare. Therefore, it is important to create general public knowledge about cyber warfare and the actions that must be taken individually. This would lead to creating an effective cyber deterrence.

Cyberwarfare is a novel domain of warfare, a challenge requiring an immediate global response to escape any catastrophe. This can be done through extensive international cooperation. Multilateral discussions on such issues help formulate rules and norms for such threats. Hence, there is a need for Cyber regulation and an agreed battlefield on a cyber-treaty. The malicious cyber-attacks have impacted the global supply chains of the services sector. This issue can also be addressed by creating global norms and treaties to manage a global supply chain.

Cyber deterrence works when the enemy is convinced of a counter offensive in cyberspace. It is, therefore, important to have a policy and declaration of offensive capabilities and readiness to communicate the rules of engagement. This awareness prevents conflicts. Many countries have said that a response to a cyber-attack will not be limited to the cyber domain. The US, China, Russia and other countries are incorporating professional people possessing cyber expertise to cope with such threats.

Conclusion

There have been several challenges to national security given the rise of emerging technologies notably in cyberspace. Currently, adversaries are carrying out jeopardizing tactics against each other by targeting sensitive areas unable to be retaliated through physical force. Conflicts in

the foreseeable future will not only be fought by the armies on battlefields but also by the malicious codes possessing the capability to subvert the critical infrastructure of a country. Any such assault could paralyze the mobilization of armies and the resources needed at the time of war. Therefore, cyber security measures and strengthening resilience in the system through policy implementation and investments in emerging technologies is the pivotal factor in national security.

It exhibits the prominence of safeguarding the infrastructure which is fundamental to national security. The importance of cyber security also highlights the growing potency of cyber incursions and better ways to target critical institutions of a state. Therefore, it needs to be recognized that cyber security is national security.

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Indo-US Strategic Convergence: Implications for South Asia

By Sabiha Mehreen³ and Iraj Abid⁴ published in CISS Insight (Vol. X, No. 1)

Abstract

The United States (US) dominance in the current global order has been challenged by China's economic rise in the twenty-first century. The US has always sought allies and strategic partners in different regions to counter any threats it faces in the global arena. In South Asia, the US has partnered with India to counter the rising influence of China in Asia-Pacific (APAC) region and to maintain its dominant status in the world. This strategic convergence has two-fold implications: (i) Fuelling the great-power rivalry; and (ii) Creating strategic instability particularly in the region, as it remains one of the theatres of conflict between the great powers. This, in turn, diminishes the prospects of peace and increases the risk of conflict escalation between the two nuclear-armed arch rivals in South Asia – Pakistan and India. The paper examines the evolution and nature of Indo-US strategic convergence in the twenty-first century and its impact on strategic stability in South Asia.

Keywords: Indo-US, South Asia, strategic partnership, strategic stability

Introduction

Being the sole superpower for almost three decades, the US has always looked for strategic allies and partners to protect its dominant status across the world. To maintain its preponderance in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, Washington has designed a toolbox containing strategies for hedging against Beijing, such as the so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), and the QUAD and AUKUS partnerships.

In the APAC region, Washington seeks to strengthen its alliance with New Delhi to contain Beijing. This trend specifically gained momentum in the twenty-first century, where the US and India have signed four foundational agreements: (i) General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA); (ii) Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA); (iii) Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA); and (iv) Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), as well as several other defence and trade agreements. The Indo-US relations function within the structural framework of the bilateral strategic partnership rather than alliance.¹ In contrast to alliances, strategic partnerships are a loose form of alignment involving a less binding commitment.² Most developing states choose this kind of “limited alignment” as it offers benefits without loss of autonomy.³

The Indo-US relationship is more of a marriage of convenience where the US believes that India, due to its large geography and economy, has the potential to actualise the so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy. The US National Security Strategy (NSS) released by the Trump administration in 2017, mentioned the term Indo-Pacific in place of Asia-Pacific, which was a part of US strategy to contain China. Moreover, in May 2018, the Trump administration extended the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the US Pacific Command (USPACOM) to include area up to the western border of India and renamed it as US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM).⁴ This shift was orchestrated in order to deal with the rising threats

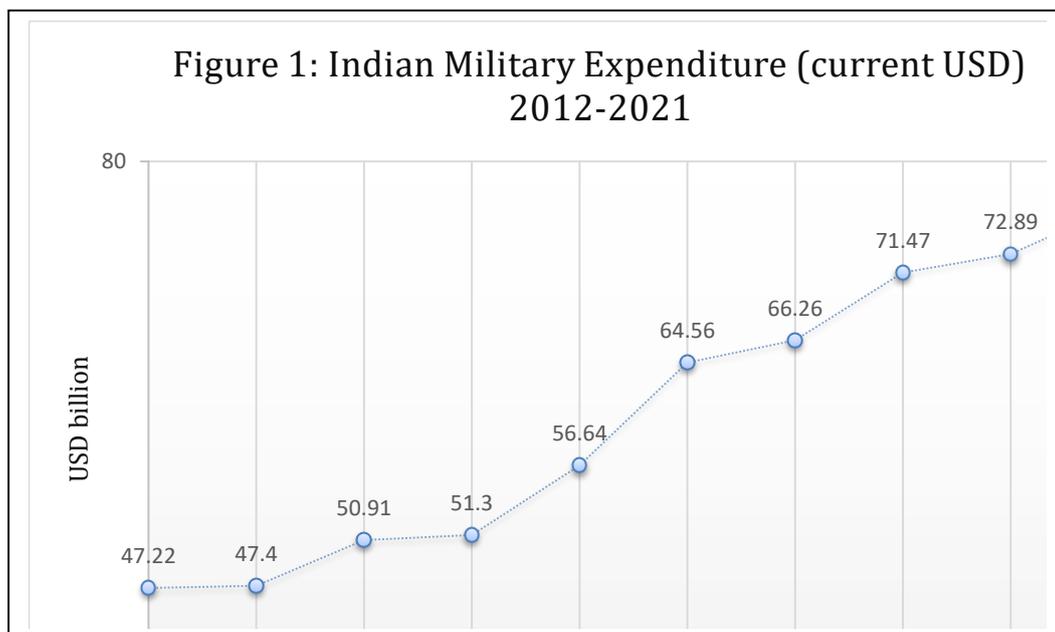
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emanating from China and assigning the role of “net security provider” 5 in the region to India. The so-called Indo-Pacific term is thus a manifestation of the increasing strategic rivalry between the US and China.

India views its partnership with the US as an opportunity to pursue its strategic interests in the region and beyond. This threatens peace and stability in Asia like nowhere else in the world because the region has the largest number of Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS) – China, Russia, Pakistan, India and North Korea. Each of them shares border with at least one other NWS.

The current Indo-US strategic partnership also seeks to change the security architecture of South Asia. The two South Asian NWS share 75-years’ history of bitter and hostile relations with three major wars and numerous border skirmishes. Indian massive arms build-up and growing asymmetry between India and Pakistan in military terms is threatening strategic balance in South Asia. According to the data released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2022, India spent around USD 76.6 billion on its defence in 2021. It is the world’s largest importer of major arms accounting for 11 per cent of total global arms imports in the last five years (2017-21).⁶ Figure 1 illustrates upward trend in Indian military expenditure over the last decade.⁷ Given India’s increasing strategic convergence with the US, Pakistan strives for restoring the strategic balance and peace in the region, without entering into an arms race.



Indo-US Relations during the Cold War

Source: World Bank

During the Cold War, the relationship between India and the US remained uneven owing to their divergent views over the US rivalry with the USSR and communist tendencies of early Indian leaders such as Nehru. Despite India’s officially declared policy of non-alignment (1961), New Delhi and Moscow signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation in 1971, where the two countries pledged to cooperate in fields of economy, science and technology.⁸ According to the article IX of the Treaty, the two parties also undertook to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party against each other. It further states that they also agreed that in the event of either party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, they shall enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries.⁹

Due to India being in the Soviet camp, it had cold and at times even hostile relations with the US during most of the Cold War years.¹⁰ The US viewed India posing a “two-fold threat”: (i) Challenging the US containment policy against the USSR; and (ii) Aiming to destroy Pakistan, a key US ally during the Cold War.¹¹ The issue of nuclear proliferation also remained an important irritant in the Indo-US relations. In May 1974, India carried out its so-called Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) at Pokhran. The US considered this as a damaging breach in the non-proliferation efforts. In response to Indian test, Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was established in 1975 to regulate nuclear related exports and imports with an objective to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹² Ironically, in 2005, the US signed a nuclear deal with India, called Indo-US nuclear deal. For executing the deal Bush administration lobbied for India’s NSG waiver in 2008.

Commenting on India’s non-alignment status, US President Eisenhower’s Secretary of State John Foster Dulles declared that the “neutrality was an immoral and short-sighted conception”.¹³ However, despite divergent views about the communist threat, the US tried to maintain a working relationship with India because of its large size and regional significance. This was evident from the development aid provided by the US to India during the Cold War years.¹⁴ Moreover, during 1962 Sino-Indian war, the US also provided military aid to India, which was accepted by India under what can be called as a “military reliance if not military alliance”.¹⁵

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War, new geopolitical realities began to emerge resulting in the reassessment of past alliances. In the mid-1990s, common political interests brought the US and India closer.¹⁶ Washington started viewing New Delhi as a significant Asian power. Simultaneously, liberalisation of Indian economy and globalisation also acted as a source of convergence between the two countries.¹⁷

The five Indian nuclear explosions on 11 and 13 May 1998 strained the relations between the US and India. Pakistan responded with six successful nuclear tests on 28 and 30 May 1998. Sanctions were imposed on both India and Pakistan through the Glenn Amendments as a consequence of the nuclear tests. However, many sanctions were removed from India in 1999 due to its powerful economic lobby in the US.¹⁸ Subsequently, fourteen rounds of Jaswant Singh (Indian Minister of External Affairs)/Strobe Talbott (US Deputy Secretary of State) discussions were held (1998-2000) to continue dialogue on security, non-proliferation, disarmament and other global issues.¹⁹ However, commercial and economic interests outweighed the global nuclear proliferation concerns as the US-India talks led to a process that culminated in the signing of Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal in 2005.

Regional Implications of Indo-US Strategic Partnership in the Twenty-First Century

The former US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robert Blake stated that there has been a shift from “a transatlantic century to a transpacific century, in which the rise of Asia has already started to define the twenty-first century.”²⁰ The emerging geopolitical and geo-economic contestation between the US and China, led by the rise of China in the twenty-first century has created greater space for strategic cooperation between Washington and New Delhi.²¹

The strategic convergence between the US and India started to take shape in post-September 11 years and has since transformed into a strategic partnership. Under the Bush administration, the Indo-US bilateral defence ties were strengthened and military to military exchanges were initiated. India became a valuable US ally in Asia and a major strategic player. Washington viewed this strategic convergence as a useful counterweight to China.²² Since then, the bilateral relationship between India and the US has gradually transformed into a comprehensive

strategic partnership covering multiple domains including trade, technology and defence.²³

Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal: The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal, signed in 2005, is a major pillar of the strategic partnership between the two countries as it recognised India as a *de facto* NWS and removed technological restrictions on India thereby allowing it to have access to sophisticated nuclear technologies.²⁴ The Deal continues to undermine the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

NSG Waiver for India: In 2008, India was granted a US-sponsored NSG waiver that enabled it to engage in trade of nuclear material and technology with the world. The waiver was a continuation of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal.²⁵ Under this deal, despite being a non-NPT state, India is enjoying the privileges of a NSG state and is able to receive nuclear material and technology from NSG member states. It is also able to use its indigenous stocks and divert imported fissile material for production of nuclear weapons.²⁶ Currently, eight nuclear reactors of India are outside IAEA safeguards. The waiver has enabled India to negotiate agreements on nuclear cooperation with various countries, including the US, France, Canada, Russia, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and a few others.²⁷ The US also wants India to become a member of NSG despite it being a non-NPT state. Pakistan has also applied for the NSG membership owing to the fact that it has the same credentials as India and has been insisting on a non-discriminatory criteria-based approach. If a discriminatory approach is pursued with respect to the pending Indian bid for the NSG membership, it would increase instability in South Asia and disturb the global peace and security.

The US Pivot to Asia: In 2012, the Obama administration announced its “rebalancing” or “Pivot to Asia” policy that prominently emphasised Indian role in the APAC. On elaborating the Pivot to Asia, the former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton wrote, “Our challenge now is to build a web of partnerships and institutions across the Pacific that is as durable and as consistent with American interests and values as the web we have built across the Atlantic.”²⁸ It is argued that the US “Pivot” policy was aimed at making India a regional economic anchor and a security provider in the so-called Indo-Pacific region.²⁹ The US “Pivot” policy was complementary to India’s “Look East” policy³⁰ which was adopted to increase economic integration with South East Asian states. India renamed it as “Act East” policy and expanded its area of focus to integration with East Asia in 2014. The synergy of interests between the two states, mainly to contain China through curbing its influence in the ASEAN region,³¹ further enhanced Indo-US defence partnership.

Foundational Agreements between the US and India: In 2002, the US and India signed their first foundational agreement titled “General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)” which enabled the sharing of classified military information between the two countries. The two countries signed the extension of GSOMIA in 2019, titled “Industrial Security Annex (ISA)” which enabled the US to share classified information and technology with private Indian defence corporations.³²

In 2016, the US and India signed “Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)” that allowed forces of the two countries to share each other’s military bases in all three forces for reinforcements, supplies and carrying out mechanical repairs.³³

The “Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)” was signed in 2018 which permitted both countries to share secure communication and exchange information during training exercises and operations.³⁴

“Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA),” signed in 2020, further strengthened the Indo-US strategic cooperation with providing India access to real time sensitive information

through US geospatial intelligence.³⁵ It allows the exchange of both unclassified and controlled unclassified geospatial products, topographical, nautical, and aeronautical data, products and services between India and the US.³⁶

The Indo-US strategic cooperation under these foundational agreements provides India a strategic edge over Pakistan. Therefore, it has the potential to destabilise the region and adversely impact strategic stability of South Asia.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy: The so-called Indo-Pacific strategy, which aims to promote security ties among “like-minded partners” in the region and beyond,³⁷ is based on the shared concerns of the US and India related to China’s growing geopolitical and geo-economic influence globally. It was first announced by Trump administration to consolidate and expand the US network of partnerships to contain China in the APAC. The US Strategy assigned the role of “net security provider” in the region to India.³⁸

However, the National Security Committee of Pakistan, in its meeting on 24 August 2017, rejected the US assertion, stating that “India cannot be a net security provider in the region when it has conflictual relationships with all its neighbours and is pursuing a policy of destabilising Pakistan.”³⁹ Islamabad has consistently maintained that New Delhi played a role of spoiler in Afghanistan and used Afghan territory for fomenting terrorism in Pakistan during two decades of NATO presence in the country.

STA-1 Status to India: In 2018, India became the third Asian and the only South Asian state which was given the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) status by the US. The Status gives India the leverage to purchase important military hardware from the US. It allows the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment to India without fulfilling license requirements.⁴⁰ The US grants STA-1 Status to only close allies and those which are members of the four export control regimes including Australia Group (AG), Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).⁴¹ However, the US granted STA-1 Status to India, despite its non-member status of the NSG.

The STA-1 Status of India consequently contributes to intensifying regional security dilemma and obliging Pakistan to take appropriate measures to restore the strategic balance in South Asia. The US strategy to prop up India has emboldened it to adopt an aggressive posture in the region and resort to brinkmanship, threatening peace and strategic stability in the region.

The US-India Joint Military Exercises: According to the US Secretary of Air Force Frank Kendall, the US holds more joint exercises with India than any other country.⁴² This can be traced back to the 1992 Indo-US joint naval exercise along the Malabar Coast, which was subsequently joined by Australia and Japan in 2007. India is also participating in the world’s largest US-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise since 2014. The two countries conducted their first ever tri-service military exercises namely Tiger Triumph in November 2019.⁴³ Moreover, in March 2022, the US for the first time participated in the multilateral Milan naval exercise hosted by Indian Navy. Among the bilateral Indo-US joint military exercises are the Yudh Abhyas (2002), the Cope India air exercise (2004) and the Vajra Prahar Army exercises (2010). These joint military exercises in all three services pose a greater security threat to the region and beyond.

Bilateral Defence Trade: Defence trade is a major component of the Indo-US strategic partnership that continues to expand as a result of “major defence partner” status accorded by the US to India in 2016. According to the US Department of State (2021), the defence trade between the US and India increased to USD 20 billion in 2020 from nearly zero in 2008.⁴⁴ Moreover, multiple defence agreements, such as the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative

(2012), have been signed between the two countries that allow India to co-produce advanced weapon systems and using sophisticated military technology with the US.⁴⁵ The technologies and weapon systems enable India to conduct covert intelligence-gathering operations against Pakistan. In case of any crisis, especially in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India will be in a position to receive real-time information with the US assistance.

2+2 Ministerial Dialogue: In continuation of the growing strategic convergence, India and the US held their first 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in 2018. Both sides called the dialogue a “reflection of the shared commitment” wherein the two countries reaffirmed their strategic cooperation in defence, security and technology in the so-called Indo-Pacific region and beyond. The first Dialogue was followed by three subsequent 2+2 dialogues in 2019, 2020 and 2022, in which increasing strategic cooperation was discussed in addition to strengthening people-to-people ties. The US and India continued to reaffirm their cooperation on the US policy of Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

The Joint Statement of the fourth US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, held on 11 April 2022, reflects reaffirmation from both the countries for building an advanced and comprehensive bilateral defence partnership. It acknowledged the importance of extending collaboration in emerging defense domains including artificial intelligence (AI), space and cyber.⁴⁶

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) among the US, India, Japan and Australia is a significant dimension of the US so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy. It was initiated in 2007 as an informal group proclaiming its commitment to a free and open, inclusive, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific.⁴⁷ The idea did not make much headway in 2008 due to diplomatic protests from Beijing which perceived it as an Asian NATO aimed at containing China.⁴⁸ The Quad was revived in November 2017 on the side lines of the 31st ASEAN Summit.

The Quad focuses on the so-called Indo-Pacific region which is a major global trade and energy supply route, with 60 per cent of maritime trade passing through it.⁴⁹ In 2019, the US trade worth USD 1.9 trillion passed through this region,⁵⁰ which reinforces the region’s geostrategic significance for the US.

The US Economic Dependence on China: Despite its desire and intentions to contain China, the US is restrained by its own economic interests vis-à-vis China. The US-China relationship is marked by complex interdependence that has developed over decades. Although, the governments try to limit their dependence on each other yet robust trade and investment ties exist between the two countries. In 2020, Beijing was US largest trading partner, the biggest source of imports and third largest market for the US exports.⁵¹ In 2019, around 1.2 million American jobs depended on exports to China. Despite the US-initiated trade war between the US and China, the current balance of their bilateral trade is heavily in favour of China.⁵²

In order to maintain international peace and security, the US is obliged to cooperate with China which is a global power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Whereas, irrespective of the efforts of the US and other western countries to prop up India, its significance at the global level pales in comparison to China.

India’s Aggressive Posture in the Region

The Indo-US partnership adversely impacts strategic stability in South Asia. India ranks among world’s top arms importers, with Russia and the US as its leading suppliers of military hardware. This adds to the conventional imbalance between Pakistan and India which already exists since their inception.

India claims that it is faced with a two-front war threat which projects a collusive danger from Pakistan and China. India uses this to extract political and military favours from the West for its arms build-up, as the narrative also fits into the calculus of Western powers. India's Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) against Pakistan was also designed keeping in view the larger ambitions of dominating the region through tactics of mobilisation of troops and combat readiness. Moreover, India shifted its nuclear doctrine from 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' to 'Minimum Deterrence' and mentioned the use of 'surgical strikes' as a formal tool of retaliation in Joint Services Doctrine 2017.⁵³ This was supplemented by 2018 Land Warfare Doctrine in which the role of emerging technologies in future warfare was discussed, which highlighted India's growing quest for military modernisation, heavy import and indigenous production of weaponry.⁵⁴ All of this endangers the regional strategic stability and disturbs the existing state of nuclear deterrence.

In addition to the above, India's aggressive posture also includes India's military misadventurism through the so-called 'surgical strikes' inside Pakistan's territory and its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. On 26 February 2019, Indian Air force (IAF) violated Pakistan's airspace and dropped bombs in Balakot area. It was the first ever incident of aggression by one NWS against another NWS. The incident was also a glaring example of India's behaviour as an irresponsible NWS.

Kashmir continues to be a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia due to India's aggressive posture and has been a cause of three major wars between Pakistan and India. On 5 August 2019, the incumbent Indian BJP government illegally changed the special status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, by splitting and incorporating it as two separate union territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, by suspending article 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution.

Pakistan's Role in Maintaining Strategic Balance in South Asia

Despite several factors adversely impacting the strategic stability in South Asia, Pakistan's nuclear capability has proved to be a factor of stability in the region. Pakistan's policy of Full Spectrum Deterrence achieved in line with its policy Credible Minimum Deterrence guarantees Pakistan's national security as well as peace and stability in the region. In addition to this, it has neutralised Indian conventional military advantage.

Former Director General Strategic Plans Division (DG SPD) Lt Gen Khalid Kidwai (R) in a conference stated that, "In the strategic stability-instability paradigm of South Asia, it has become Pakistan's responsibility to ensure that strategic stability will not be disturbed to Pakistan's disadvantage at any stage despite India's consistent efforts to swing the pendulum towards instability." He also cautioned India "not to consider Pakistan's robust nuclear capability as a bluff, and if an irresponsible military adventure were to be undertaken, Pakistan will respond forcefully under its retaliatory doctrine of Quid Pro Quo Plus."⁵⁵

Fault lines in the Indo-US Strategic Partnership

India-China Economic Relations: Despite border disputes, India-China bilateral trade continues to grow. It was USD 125 billion in 2021, making Beijing the largest trade partner of New Delhi. The US stood at second with USD 113 billion trade with India.⁵⁶ In this view, the current India-China trade linkages hamper India's role as a reliable US strategic partner and a dependable Quad member.

The Russia Factor: Due to Russia's resurgence as a global power, the world order is undergoing transformation. Food and energy security have begun to impact the strategic calculus of many countries around the world. This is evident from the fact that despite its

strategic partnership with the US, India has declined to tow the Western line on Ukraine conflict. This is largely because India and Russia share bilateral relations since the Cold War era. Furthermore, India continues to heavily rely on Russian arms and weaponry. Russia was the largest supplier of major arms to India in the last decade (2012–21).⁵⁷

More recently, India has been purchasing Russian oil on discounted prices amid the Ukraine crisis despite the US pressure to the contrary. The US criticism of situation of religious freedom in India in a recently published report is part of the US pressure tactics in order to oblige New Delhi to follow the Washington's line over the Ukraine issue.⁵⁸ Notably, the US senior officials have also criticised India's human rights abuses.

India – An Outlier in Quad: India is seen by many as an outlier in the Quad. In case of direct confrontation with China, India will not be able to bear military and economic costs, therefore, it seems to avoid provoking Beijing.⁵⁹ For instance, the Indo-China violent skirmishes in Galwan Valley (2020), where India lost twenty soldiers, exposed India's inability to effectively respond to even small-scale border conflicts with China. Moreover, India lacks naval power projection capabilities in the South China Sea. These weaknesses raise serious questions about India's will and ability to achieve the Quad objective of Chinese containment. For India, the alternate option is that of cooperation with its neighbouring countries. A Stimson study on *Crisis and Consequences in Southern Asia* states that in the context of Quad, India should have good relations with its neighbours – Pakistan and China – rather than opting for hostile relations on its both fronts.⁶⁰

AUKUS: AUKUS is a security partnership between the US, the UK, and Australia aiming to assist Australia in developing and deploying nuclear-powered submarines and joint research and development of Hypersonic Missiles.⁶¹ Although, AUKUS does not name China, the arrangement is aimed at containing China in the region. India, despite being a Quad partner, is excluded from the AUKUS creating internal divisions and resentment among the strategic thinkers of India⁶² which dampen India's role in the Quad.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, the Indo-US relationship has gradually transformed into a bilateral strategic partnership where the US is converging with India to contain China. For this purpose, Washington is supporting New Delhi in developing and modernising its conventional and nuclear capabilities, hence, transforming India into a regional hegemon and a potential destabiliser in South Asia. The US has overlooked non-proliferation concerns and gone out of its way to seek favours for India, in particular from NSG, which is a clear indication that the US approach towards the two South Asian NWS is discriminatory. Despite Indo-US strategic partnership, there are fault lines that can adversely impact US-India bilateral relations in view of rapidly changing world order. There are question marks about India's role as a reliable Quad partner in achieving its objective of containing China, given India's interests vis-à-vis China.

India's aggressive posture in the region, as evident from the Balakot incident, intrusion attempts by Indian submarines in Pakistan's territorial waters, its refusal to peacefully resolve the outstanding disputes with Pakistan including Kashmir and India's counterforce temptations, continue to impact strategic stability in the region and pose a threat to regional and international peace and stability. It also diminishes prospects for regional cooperation. Owing to India's massive arms acquisition drive, Pakistan is compelled to take measures to restore the regional strategic balance and its nuclear program is a factor of stability in South Asia. Pakistan will never accept India as a net security provider in the region. Common challenges posed by non-traditional security threats, such as climate change, remain unattended due to India's hostile posture in the region.

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