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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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ACRONYMS

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATV	Advanced Technology Vehicle
AUKUS	Australia, US and UK
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
BLF	Balochistan Liberation Front
BLT	Balochistan Liberation Tigers
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BRA	Baloch Republican Army
BRG	Baloch Republican Guard
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CA	Central Asia
CDD	Cross-domain Deterrence
CDT	Classical Deterrence Theory
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMD	Credible Minimum Deterrence
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSD	Cold Start Doctrine
DND	Draft Nuclear Doctrine
DRDO	Defense Research and Development Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EEU	Exclusive Economic Zone
ELINT	Electronic Intelligence
EO	Electro-optical
ESPO	Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FSD	Full Spectrum Deterrence
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GLCM	Ground Launched Cruise Missile
GSO	Geosynchronous Orbit
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAI	Israeli Aerospace Industries

IBGs	Integrated Battle Groups
IFC	Information Fusion Centers
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IO	Indian Ocean
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IP Gas	Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline
IRGC	Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRNSS	Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System
IS-K	Islamic State Khorasan
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organization
IUUF	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JV	Joint Venture
KP	Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa
LEAs	Law Enforcing Agencies
LEO	Low Earth Orbit
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LOC	Line of Control

MAPS	Madras Atomic Power Station
MEO	Medium Earth Orbit
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOMA	Ministry of Maritime Affairs
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFU	No First Use
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NSA	National Security Agency
NSG	Nuclear Supplier Group
PAD	Prithvi Air Defense
PBP	Partners in the Blue Pacific
PDT	Perfect Deterrence Theory
PNE	Peaceful Nuclear Explosion
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RATS	Regional Anti-terrorist Structure
RMD	Russian Maritime Doctrine
SAR	Synthetic Aperture Radar
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCS	South China Sea

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SMNs	Social Media Networks
SOCMINT	Social Media Intelligence
SRBMs	Short-Range Ballistic Missiles
SSO	Sun-synchronous Orbit
TAPI	Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India
TES	Technology Experiment Satellite
TNWs	Tactical nuclear weapons
TOT	Transfer of Technology
TTP	Tehrik -e- Taliban Pakistan
UBA	United Baloch Army
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

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Editor's Note

A compendium of thought-provoking academic analyses is presented to the worthy readership of the *Journal of Security and Strategic Analyses (JSSA)*. Eight research articles and two book reviews have been carefully selected after a rigorous three-tier double-blind peer-review process. Keeping in line with the scope of the *JSSA*, its volume 8, number 2, highlights national, regional and global issues of security and strategic importance with a particular focus on South Asia. Each research article furnishes a logical policy-oriented conclusion and a way forward by employing theoretical concepts and clearly defined methodological tools, making it a compelling volume for academics, students, and policymakers.

The first research article, entitled "Deterrence under Surveillance: Indian Space-based ISR Capabilities and Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence", examines the impact of India's space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities on Pakistan's nuclear deterrence and posture. The author claims that the growth of the Indian military space program, along with its great interest and investment in supersonic cruise missiles and ballistic missile defense program, indicates that India is building up its First Strike potential against Pakistan's strategic assets and installations. The developments will have a tremendous impact on deterrence stability in South Asia as it increases the likelihood of a nuclear escalation in future.

The second research article, entitled "Pakistan and Russia's Convergence of Interests in the Emerging Geopolitical Environment," explicitly examines how emerging geopolitical and security milieus, geo-economic outlook and regional connectivity shape the commonality of interests in the foreign policy options of the states. The author argues that the changing global environment has become an opportunity for Russia and Pakistan to redefine their relationship, and both countries should believe in strong multilateralism as the way to go in foreign relations. Furthermore, the author suggested that both countries see

their strategic, political and economic interests converging in the light of the regional security milieu and interregional cooperation.

The third research article is "Post-2019 Spike in Terrorism: A Threat to Internal Security of Pakistan." This paper investigates the significant growth of terrorism in Pakistan as a threat to the country's internal security. The authors employ the situational method of qualitative approach encompassing various events and situations causing the intensity of terrorism in Pakistan from January 2020 to June 2022. Furthermore, the authors suggested that Pakistan should initiate new projects where required and consolidate a host of domestic anti-terrorism and counterterrorism initiatives as part of the National Action Plan to negotiate peace with reconcilable elements, rehabilitate ones who renounce violence and use selective force against those challenging writ of the state. Internal political cohesion, ideological harmony and balanced socio-economic uplift strategies are vital to achieving the desired objectives.

The fourth research article, entitled "National Security and its Linkage with Social Media: Lessons for Pakistan," explores the literature on conceptual aspects of national security, its relationship with social media, and its impacts on the national security of Pakistan. This paper answers a few questions, i.e., what is national security? How does social media overlap with it? and what are the implications of social media for the national security of Pakistan? The methodology applied in this research is qualitative and relies on secondary sources; therefore, literature has been explored to find the answers. The analysis of this research is inspired by the thematic analysis technique through which it has been ascertained that national security is a subjective phenomenon and is mainly defined by national values.

The fifth research article, entitled "Restructuring Strategic Maritime Interests and Blockade Politics in the Indian Ocean." This research article appraises a comprehensive assessment of Pakistan's contemporary maritime challenges against the backdrop of CPEC. It also

takes impetus in evaluating core requirements to address blockade politics and counter-blockade dispositions that might arise in Gulf, Middle East, and other sections connected within the Indian Ocean. The study results highlight the significance of modernization and the induction of new naval platforms and doctrines.

The sixth research article, entitled "Causal Analysis of India's Response to Maritime Security Debate at the UNSC" presents the response to Indian Duplicities in the wake of the Russian proposal for maritime security management at UNSC in 2021. Strategic analysis with qualitative research method and exploratory approach is adopted in this research with pertinent and feasible findings.

Another insightful research article is "Emerging Challenges to Deterrence Stability in South Asia: A Theoretical Analysis." Through the lens of structural deterrence theory, this paper attempts to examine the threats to deterrence to stability in South Asia. The author claims that complete deterrence has become a mirage in South Asia. The author examines the security disorder in South Asia as the most pertinent threat - the two nuclear archrivals, India and Pakistan, who are accumulating military power.

The last research article, entitled "JCPOA and Challenges for Non-Proliferation Regime", explores how the deal shall impact domestic and global security in terms of the non-proliferation regime and how the JCPOA is a decisive agreement for the fate of the non-proliferation regime. The authors claim that the non-proliferation regime is facing several challenges, which include a revival of the JCPOA nuclear deal, power imbalances, security dilemmas, polarization among regional countries, continuing proliferation activities, regional security concerns, and domestic political pressures. The authors argue that the JCPOA revival shall put the international community at peace regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons and prevent Iran from becoming another global tension area with the risk of a war outbreak.

The *JSSA* conforms to the standard HEC guidelines/rules of publication and seeks to maintain the general quality of the contributions as per the international standards. It is an HEC-HJRS-recognized journal in the Y-category and aspires to become a top-ranking HEC-recognized journal. The quality aspect remains and will always be the prime concern of the SVI, supplemented by a careful selection of the manuscripts, wherein the readers can find a collection of well-written, academically sound research papers that have attempted to methodically examine various strategic and security issues in detail. It is hoped that the readers will be able to benefit from the analyses presented in this issue. SVI will continue to bring out subsequent volumes of *JSSA* regularly and is looking forward to receiving high-quality manuscripts exclusively written for the *JSSA*.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Deterrence Under Surveillance: Indian Space-based ISR Capabilities and Pakistan's Nuclear Deterrence

Akash Shah¹

Abstract

India is rapidly building up its space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Although Indian military assets in space are in contention with the Chinese space program, they also make Pakistan apprehensive about the future of its nuclear deterrence. Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons to deter its much larger and stronger arch-nemesis, India, from violating its territorial integrity. Pakistan's nuclear deterrence and strategy are aligned with the Perfect Deterrence Theory, a diversion from the Classical Deterrence Theory used to understand the deterrence relationship between the USA and USSR during the Cold War. The study addresses the impact of India's space-based ISR capabilities on Pakistan's nuclear deterrence and posture. The growth of the Indian military space program, along with its great interest and investment in supersonic cruise missiles and ballistic missile defence program, indicates that India is building up its First Strike potential against Pakistan's strategic assets and installations. The developments will tremendously impact deterrence stability in South Asia as they will increase the likelihood of a nuclear escalation in the future.

Keywords: Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), India, Pakistan, Nuclear Deterrence, Nuclear Doctrines.

¹ Akash Shah is a Research Officer at the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), Islamabad.

Introduction

The Indian space program is regarded as one of the world's most ambitious and exponentially expanding space programs. Over the last two decades, India has established itself as a spacefaring nation having the potential to impact the great power competition in space. India has not only achieved significant milestones on its own, but it has been collaborating with other space agencies worldwide, including NASA.² From its inception, the Indian space program has been primarily oriented around socio-economic development, techno-nationalism, and politics.³ However, given the dual-use nature of space technologies and strategic needs, the program's scope was gradually broadened towards developing and deploying space assets to fulfil military requirements. One of the driving factors behind the shift was China's growing space capabilities in the offence and defence realm. In 2008, then-Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor stated that the Indian Army looks forwards to the expansion of its agenda for space as modernization is taking place.⁴ Hence, it became evident that the Indian space program would expand further into the strategic realm because of regional and international geopolitical dynamics.

Since then, the military component of the Indian Space program has evolved considerably. India has indigenously developed and procured space technologies with exclusive military applications such as anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles, ballistic missiles, and ballistic missile defence systems. The cooperation with NASA, in particular, has helped

² Kartik Bommakanti, "Satellite integration and multiple independently retargetable reentry vehicles technology: Indian–United States Civilian Space Cooperation." *Astropolitics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 7-31.

³ Joan Johnson-Freese, "Maintaining US leadership in human spaceflight." *Space Policy* 21, no. 4 (2005): 239-242.

⁴ Monika Chansoria, "Chansoria Indian Military and Space," Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 2009,

http://www.claws.in/index.php?action=master&task=168&u_id=28

the civilian along with the purely military dimension of the Indian space program.⁵ However, India has also successfully deployed dual-use assets such as satellites for navigation, mapping, telecommunication, and earth observation. The growth in space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities has given India an edge over Pakistan. As both countries are armed with nuclear weapons and have engaged in a protracted conflict over a territorial dispute in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, the expansion of Indian ISR capabilities in space is likely to impact the deterrence stability in the region.

The study aims to assess the impact of India's existing and planned ISR capabilities in space on Pakistan's nuclear deterrence. The first part of the study focuses on India's space-based ISR infrastructure and plans to enhance India's edge in outer space. The second part discusses the evolution and contours of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence, arguing that the concept is more aligned with the Perfect Deterrence Theory (PDT) rather than viewing it from the traditionally dominant lens of Classical Deterrence Theory (CDT).⁶ The third and final part of the study explores the impact of India's capabilities in space on South Asia's nuclear escalation equation. Particularly in light of India's stated intentions of a First Strike to break the strategic paralysis and regain the strategic dominance over Pakistan, thus increasing the likelihood of an all-out nuclear escalation.

India's ISR capabilities in space

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has come a long way since its first space launch in 1975. Since its inception, ISRO has launched 129 Indian satellites into space along with 342 satellites from 36 different

⁵ Kartik Bommakanti, "Satellite integration and multiple independently retargetable reentry vehicles technology: Indian–United States Civilian Space Cooperation."

⁶ Frank Zagare, and Marc Kilgour. *Perfect deterrence*. Vol. 72 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000),32.

countries.⁷ Currently, India has 53 operational satellites in various categories with different specifications performing various functions such as navigation, communication, and remote sensing.⁸ Most of these satellites provide data critical for socio-economic development as it has traditionally been the focus of India's space research. However, during the Kargil conflict with Pakistan, India direly felt that the incursion could have been prevented had there been the means of surveillance of the high-altitude region.⁹ Consequently, India launched its first satellite with military capabilities, Technology Experiment Satellite (TES), in 2001,¹⁰ and hence began the process of deploying the assets in space to enhance on-ground situational awareness. Within a relatively short span, Indian political and strategic brass internalized the idea that space is an essential component of their plans for the modernization of Indian forces. In 2007, Indian Minister of External Affairs Pranab Mukherji stressed the need to capitalize on space as a force multiplier in offensive and defensive domains while denying the adversary access to it simultaneously.¹¹ Indian realization of space as a warfighting domain eventually resulted in the anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test in March 2019, taking it to the tier of a few countries with proven ASAT ability. However, given the scope of this paper, the focus would only be on the Indian ISR capabilities since the launch of its first spy satellite in 2001.

⁷ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, ISRO has launched a total of 129 satellites of Indian Origin and 342 foreign satellites belonging to 36 countries since 1975", February 10, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1797196>

⁸ Press Information Bureau, Government of India.

⁹ Hussain, Mian Zahid, and Raja Qaiser Ahmed. "Space programs of India and Pakistan: military and strategic installations in outer space and precarious regional strategic stability." *Space Policy* 47 (2019): 63-75.

¹⁰ "TES," *Encyclopedia Astronautica*, September 3, 2022, <http://www.astronautix.com/t/tes.html>

¹¹ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "India's emerging space assets and nuclear-weapons capabilities." *The Nonproliferation Review* 26, no. 5-6 (2019): 465-479.

India has an extensive plan for a constellation of satellites in different orbits around the Earth to perform different functions that contribute to India's overall ambitious space strategy. It includes four advanced communication satellites in Geosynchronous Orbit (GSO) for C4(Command, Control, Communication and Computers) roles, a constellation of 12 Electro-optical (EO) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) for ISR purposes in Sun-synchronous orbit (SSO), three satellites for Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) operations and a constellation of 40 and 24 satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) to provide military internet facility and ISR capabilities during crises respectively.¹² Furthermore, the plan includes complete self-reliance in navigation via seven satellites in Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits, along with the extension of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) with an additional 24 satellites in the Medium Earth Orbit (MEO).¹³

Currently, India has the largest remote sensing satellite system and one of the largest communication systems in the world, known as the IRS satellite series and INSAT series, respectively.¹⁴ Although remote sensing satellites are generally categorized as civilian use assets such as urban development, resource management etc. However, at the same time, they could be used for military surveillance. All the remote sensing satellites launched by India after 2000 can produce a high-quality image of the terrain they are monitoring hence they are dual-use space resources at least.¹⁵ CARTOSAT and RISAT series satellites launched by ISRO are significant in this regard because of their ability to produce high-quality images in different spatial and spectral bands.

¹²Subrahmanyam Chandrashekar, "Space, war and security-A strategy for India (NIAS Report No. R36-2015)." (2015).

¹³Subrahmanyam Chandrashekar, "Space, war and security-A strategy for India".

¹⁴Sobia Paracha, "Military dimensions of the Indian space program." *Astro politics* 11, no. 3 (2013): 156-186.

¹⁵Siddhartha, "Military dimensions in the future of the Indian presence in space." *USI of India* (2000): 243-258.

CARTOSAT series is being launched since 2005,¹⁶ and they have been categorized as remote sensing satellites for civilian applications, apart from CARTOSAT-2A, a dedicated military satellite.¹⁷ Over the years, ISRO's ability has expanded to launch an astounding number of indigenously built and foreign satellites, while the quality and specifications of these satellites have also significantly improved. For instance, the spatial resolution of Bhaskar-I, launched in 1979, was 1 Km which improved to 6 meters for the Indian Remote Sensing satellite (IRS-1C) launched in 1995 and further to 1 meter for Technology Experiment Satellite (TES).¹⁸ CARTOSAT-2, launched in 2007 to a distance of 630 Km into Sun-Synchronous orbit, has a resolution of 0.8m over a 9.6 Km swath.¹⁹ CARTOSAT-2B was launched in 2008 with even better functionalities, as it can capture stereoscopic images by steering between the orbital tracks.²⁰ CARTOSAT satellites are also being used for military purposes apart from their designated civilian usage.

RISAT (Radio Imaging Satellite) series is more oriented to military use as it operates under all weather conditions and functions even during the night. Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) used for all-weather, all-time imaging also has civilian use. Still, the associated cost of operation is not economically feasible to be used exclusively for this purpose.²¹ As India's indigenously built RISAT-I was undergoing delays, ISRO partnered with Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI) and built RISAT-2 based on IAI's TechSAR design. RISAT-2 was launched in 2009 followed

¹⁶Indian Space Research Organization, "Cartosat-1", May, 05, 2022, <https://www.isro.gov.in/Spacecraft/cartosat-1>

¹⁷Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai. "India's emerging space assets and nuclear-weapons capabilities."

¹⁸Sobia Paracha, "Military dimensions of the Indian space program".

¹⁹"CARTOSAT-2A Remote Sensing Satellite, India," Aerospace Technology.com, <http://www.aerospace-technology.com/projects/cartosat-2a>

²⁰Sobia Paracha, Military dimensions of.

²¹"SAR," Sandia Laboratories, <http://www.sandia.gov/radar/whatis.html> September 11, 2022.

by RISAT-I in 2012. Due to an unexplained event, RISAT-I was eventually declared non-operational by ISRO in 2018.²² Subsequently, ISRO launched RISAT-2B and RISAT-2BR1 satellites in 2019. Apart from being an all-weather satellite, RISAT-2B's X-band SAR provides further details, such as the object's size, movement and change in velocity etc., for better analysis of the on-ground situation when analyzed with the data received from other sources, such as optical satellites.²³ Indian remote sensing experts believe that RISAT-2B can help in the detection of submarines.²⁴ However, the ability of Radio Imaging Satellites to accurately detect submarines for anti-submarine warfare remains inconclusive.²⁵ Nevertheless, with the ability of constant all-weather surveillance of oceans, SAR satellite images and AI technology, as it matures in the future, could lead to precise detection of submerged vessels.²⁶

India's space strategy is multipronged, which aims at exploiting space to intercept cross-border communication as well as designated electronic intelligence satellites to capture electromagnetic waves.²⁷ India plans to launch the communication-centric intelligence satellite

²² The Print, "ISRO to launch radar earth imaging satellite on Wednesday from Sriharikota", last modified May, 21, 2019, <https://theprint.in/science/isro-to-launch-radar-earth-imaging-satellite-risat-2b-wednesday-from-sriharikota/238235/>

²³ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, India's emerging space.

²⁴ Bhupendra Jasani. "It Can Spy and Also Do a Hundred Humdrum Things," The Hindu, last modified 26, April, 2012, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/it-can-spy-and-also-do-a-hundred-humdrum-things/article3353532.ece>

²⁵ Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Submarine Detection And Monitoring: Open-Source Tools And Technologies", September, 24, 2021, <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/submarine-detection-and-monitoring-open-source-tools-and-technologies/>

²⁶ Natasha Bajema, "Will AI Steal Submarines' Stealth? Better Detection will make the Oceans Transparent—and Perhaps Undermine Nuclear Deterrence." *IEEE Spectrum* 59, no. 9 (2022): 36-41.

²⁷ EMISAT. eoPortal.

<https://www.eoportal.org/satelliteemissions/emisat#emisatelectromagneticintelligence-gathering-satellite> August 11, 2022.

CCI-SAT to pick up the conversations across borders which could take espionage to another level. At the same time, it could be a decisive factor in a crisis.²⁸ The satellite was scheduled for launch in 2020; however, it is still undergoing development. Electronic Intelligence Satellite EMSAT is equipped with special electronic warfare instruments known as 'Kautilya' to trace and locate enemy radars.²⁹

The operational assets, as well as planned modernization and expansion of the Indian space program to cater for its offence/defence needs, distinguishes India from the rest of the emerging spacefaring nations. The plan is indicative of long-term strategic thinking on the part of India, especially to counter Chinese military assets built up in space. However, the counter abilities are not exclusively to be used against China. The precarious relations and fragile strategic stability between India and Pakistan mean that it is highly likely to impact the strategic calculus between both nuclear-armed countries.

Tenets of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence

There has been an inherent and unbridgeable geographic and resource asymmetry between India and Pakistan since the inception of both countries in 1947. Therefore, it became an existential matter for Pakistan to acquire nuclear weapons once India undertook what it called a 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE)' in 1974.³⁰ After years of covert scientific research which saw several governments change, it came down to then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to respond after Indian nuclear tests on 11th and 13th May 1998 in Pokhran. And finally, Pakistan

²⁸Kartik Bommakanti, "Strengthening the C4ISR Capabilities of India's Armed Forces: The Role of Small Satellites," *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/strengthening-the-c4isr-capabilities-of-indias-armed-forces-the-role-of-small-satellites-67842/>

²⁹ Ministry of Defense, Government of India, "Annual Report 2013-14", <https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR1314.pdf>

³⁰Khalilzad, Zalmay. "Pakistan: the making of a nuclear power." *Asian Survey* 16, no. 6 (1976): 580-592.

successfully detonated its nuclear devices in Shanghai on the 28th and 30th of May 1998. After both countries demonstrated their ability to inflict catastrophic damage on each other, it was time to decide the rules of engagement, or 'doctrines' to define the contours of their potential use. So far, much of the literature available on the subject was built on the cold war dynamics of strategic competition between two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Classical Deterrence Theory has been instrumental in explaining why the Cold War did not ever turn-'hot'? Classical Deterrence Theory (CDT) equates force symmetry and balance of power with peace. When both adversaries believe that the opponent has the requisite capabilities to strike back more forcefully in the event of a first strike, they tend to refrain from escalation, especially in the nuclear domain.³¹ However, going by the understanding of CDT, the newly emerged nuclear states were more likely to be embroiled in a nuclear conflict as it equates asymmetry with a higher probability of war.³² Nuclear weapons have prevented a major war between India and Pakistan. Furthermore, the geographical context of South Asia stood in contrast to the two superpowers during the cold war. Hence, South Asia's nuclearization was the first attempt to explore new theoretical aspects of nuclear deterrence outside Europe and North America. South Asian deterrence dynamics present a unique set of conditions that cannot be found anywhere in the world in any bilateral or multilateral deterrence settings.³³

Indian nuclear strategy is two-pronged, aiming at two of its neighbors with whom it has border disputes and fought wars in the past, China and Pakistan. Since India already holds a conventional advantage

³¹Frank Zagare, and Marc Kilgour. *Perfect deterrence*.

³²Arvind Kumar, "Theories of deterrence and nuclear deterrence in the subcontinent." In *The India-Pakistan Nuclear Relationship*, pp. 239-265. (Abingdon: Routledge India, 2020) 65.

³³Arvind Kumar, "Theories of deterrence and nuclear deterrence in the subcontinent."

over Pakistan by its vast territory and relatively much larger force size, it is understandable that India was comfortable with releasing Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND), primarily signaling China, shortly after demonstrating nuclear capability in August 1999.³⁴ Hence, one of the reasons for its pronouncement of a No First Use policy in the nuclear doctrine can be understood in the context of its strategic competition with China, which has territorial and forces the advantage over India.

On the other hand, Pakistan has asserted from the beginning that its nuclear posture is purely India-centric as it remains Pakistan's only neighbor with whom it has fought four wars since independence. Pakistan has never believed India's pledge of No First Use and has not followed India's offer of a mutual NFU policy.³⁵ It puts Pakistan at a strategic disadvantage as it goes against the very rationale of building nuclear capability in the first place. Pakistan's nuclear program was set on course after India conducted its Peaceful Nuclear Explosion PNE, and it was perceived as an existential threat to the country. Pakistani state officials have always categorically stated that the objective has never been prestige, regional dominance, or inclusion into the exclusive club of nuclear powers.³⁶ It was simply to avoid war with India as both states share a protracted conflict over Jammu and Kashmir region.

Furthermore, Pakistan has not officially declared its nuclear doctrine. Contrary to the popular notion that Pakistan does not have a nuclear doctrine, it has chosen not to make it public.³⁷ Strategic ambiguity, as it is known, compliments Pakistan's position vis-à-vis

³⁴Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine", August, 17, 1999, <https://mea.gov.in/in-focusarticle.htm?18916/Draft+Report+of+National+Security+Advisory+Board+on+Indian+Nuclear+Doctrine>

³⁵Naeem Salik, "The Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine." *Nuclear Learning in South Asia: The Next Decade* (2014): 71-84.

³⁶Naeem Salik, "The Evolution of Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine."

³⁷Naeem Salik, *The Evolution of Pakistan*.

deterrence.³⁸ Although in the beginning, the process of developing a doctrine lagged considerably compared to its weapon development program, nevertheless, once the tests were successfully conducted, Pakistan was up to the task swiftly. Pakistan had its nuclear doctrine ready well before India announced its Draft Nuclear Doctrine in 1999.³⁹

Pakistan has always maintained a "Credible Minimum Deterrence" or CMD posture. Initially, it was simply "Minimum nuclear deterrence."⁴⁰ however, the word 'credible' was later added as Pakistan developed and integrated several strategic delivery systems. Credible minimum deterrence entails the evolution and incorporation of systems and mechanisms to ensure that the adversary knows that it will face disastrous consequences if an attempt is made to change the status quo. It is simply impossible for Pakistan to build parity with the size and quality of the Indian conventional arsenal because of its smaller and perpetually struggling economy. Hence, CMD is the best possible course of action considering all the dimensions of the South Asian deterrence dynamics. Moreover, the approach corresponds to the Perfect Deterrence Theory (PDT) as it envisages the minimum and maximum threshold for the effectiveness of a threat rather than an enormous nuclear stockpile.⁴¹ A certain numeric threshold of nuclear weapons must be maintained to deter an adversary. In contrast, the utility of every additional nuclear weapon diminishes beyond a maximum effective threshold. In this way, PDT challenges the Classical Deterrence Theory assumption of overkill capacities and balance of power for deterrence stability which certainly does not explain Pakistan's nuclear deterrence against India.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Pakistan Responds to India's Nuclear Doctrine," *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 41 (November 1999), <http://www.acronym.org.uk/41pakis.htm>

⁴¹Frank Zagare, and Marc Kilgour. *Perfect deterrence*.

Against the backdrop of the 2001 Parliament attacks, India mobilized its forces along Pakistan's border. But due to the cumbersome movement of its Strike Corps, taking nearly a month, Pakistan could build up its defence on the border, and the Indian plan, either of coercion or incursion, failed. India came up with the Cold Start doctrine to bridge the operational gap for the lumbering movement of huge strike corps resulting in the loss of strategically important time.⁴² Cold Start doctrine is aimed around a limited, below the nuclear threshold, war with Pakistan through integrating various corps, i.e., infantry, armor, etc., into Integrated Battle Groups or IBGs. Focused on the element of surprise and the use of advanced Electronic Warfare means such as Samyukta.⁴³ To incapacitate Pakistan, CSD is India's solution to sub-conventional attacks on Indian soil. The plan is to swiftly move into Pakistan's territory before its defenses can force a strong fight. India had always denied the existence of CSD until 2017 when then Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat acknowledged that such a doctrine exists.⁴⁴

Pakistan resorted to Cross-domain deterrence (CDD) in response to India's Cold Start doctrine and announced Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) by incorporating Tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs). Cross-domain deterrence is using a threat, or a combination of threats, pertinent to one domain to deter an adversary from aggression or attempt to change the status quo in another domain by force.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this scheme's entire sequence of events is an escalation of the conflict to the next and

⁴²Walter Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine." *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2007): 158-190.

⁴³*Programme Samyukta Defence Research and Development Organisation - DRDO, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.* <https://www.drdo.gov.in/programme-samyukta> September 7, 2022.

⁴⁴The Economist, "What is India's "Cold Start" military doctrine?" January, 31, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/01/31/what-is-indias-cold-start-military-doctrine>

⁴⁵Jon Lindsay, Erik Gartzke, and Erik Gartzke. "Cross-domain deterrence as a practical problem and a theoretical concept." *Cross-Domain Deterrence: Strategy in an Era of Complexity*, Gartzke E and Lindsay JR (eds.), La Jolla, CA: Manuscript (2016).

more lethal domain. For instance, in response to a terrorist attack sub-conventional level, India plans to up the ante and escalate to the conventional level through limited incursion into Pakistan's territory. Finally, Pakistan's counter to such an attack is TNWs, the ultimate level of conflict, i.e., nuclear level. Hatf IX 'Nasar' short-range ballistic missile is a low-yield weapon, between 0.5-5 kilotons, that Pakistan intends to use in this regard. The fact that India had to resort to means of retaliation other than CSD for the attacks in the past, which it holds Pakistan responsible for, such as Pulwama, implied that Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence is paying dividends so far. ⁴⁶ Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa explicitly stated that NASR had poured cold water on India's cold start doctrine, implying that Pakistan has snubbed the operational efficacy of the cold start doctrine without risking full-scale nuclear escalation.⁴⁷

Following India's nuclear submarine (SSBN) program Arihant, Pakistan established Naval Strategic Forces Command headquarters in 2012 and began the quest for a sea-based deterrent. Resultantly, Pakistan successfully tested the Babur III submarine-launched cruise missile in 2017, a variant of the ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) Babur II. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Army, termed the test a major scientific milestone to counter strategic posture and doctrine in Pakistan's neighborhood.⁴⁸ A nuclear dyad is stable if both adversaries understand their mutual vulnerability to their ground-based nuclear arsenal. With the SSBN program, India began a pursuit of a credible nuclear triad. Hence, Pakistan needed to follow suit to maintain its nuclear deterrence credibility and build a

⁴⁶ibid

⁴⁷ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Nasr pours cold water on India's cold start doctrine: Bajwa," Dawn, July 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1343581>.

⁴⁸ Inter-Services Public Relation, "No PR-10/2017-ISPR", January 09, 2017, <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/press-release-detail.php?id=3672>

delivery system capable of striking back. It is especially pertinent in the context of a third strike if India resorts to massive retaliation in response to the use of TNWs against a swift-thrust cold start-like operation in Pakistan.⁴⁹ A sea-based deterrent could prevent India from massive retaliation or activating the cold start doctrine in the first place, which could potentially begin the chain of events leading to an all-out nuclear war.

Pakistan's FSD posture consists of eight ballistic missiles, two variants of ground-launched Babur cruise missiles, one sea-launched cruise missile and two types of multirole aircraft capable of delivering nuclear-capable missiles.⁵⁰ In continuance of Minimum Credible Deterrence, Pakistan has continued to upgrade the specifications and quality of its weapons delivery systems. Pakistan does not have a nuclear-powered submarine to complete the triad. Pakistan Navy announced in 2012 that it would be building SSBNs,⁵¹ but it is quite an ambitious project, at the very least, as the requisite infrastructure, technology, and cost associated with building and maintaining the SSBNs is enormous.⁵² Owing to the lack of all three critical elements, it would be safe to assume that Pakistan is unlikely to have an SSBN soon, and the deterrence outlook will be centered around existing systems and technology.

⁴⁹ Abhijnan Rej, Pakistan's Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrent and its Asymmetric Escalation Strategy, *Observer Research Foundation*, 2018.

⁵⁰ Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris, "Pakistani nuclear forces, 2016", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 72, No. 6 (2016): 368-376.

⁵¹ "Arms Control and Proliferation Profile: Pakistan | Arms Control Association." 2019, Armscontrol.org, 2019. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/pakistanprofile>.

⁵² Timothy Wright, "Counting the cost of deterrence: France's nuclear recapitalization", International Institute for strategic studies, May 14, 2021, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2021/05/france-nuclear-recapitalisation>

Impact of India's space-based ISR capabilities on Pakistan's nuclear deterrence

The idea of massive retaliation as the solely sufficient component of a nuclear strategy to deter the opponent from committing the first strike was challenged even during the cold war. Even then, technology was seen as a driver to keep the concept of nuclear deterrence dynamic rather than static.⁵³ Decades later, hypersonic missiles capable of bypassing detection through low and non-linear flight trajectory, BMD systems to provide a cover from incoming ballistic missiles and real or near-real-time surveillance from space are seen as all-encompassing and vital elements of effective nuclear force. Although India is working to improve the first two components, a special emphasis on the space-based ISR assets could be observed since it complements the former systems of attack and defence in more than one way. However, the capabilities of a country in the warfighting domain could be a vital indicator to infer its intent which at times may stand in contrast to its declared posture.

There is enough evidence to suggest that India is building up capabilities to go through with the first strike against Pakistan's nuclear arsenal to drastically reduce its counter-value capabilities.⁵⁴ The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), in its 2014 election manifesto, promised to review India's nuclear doctrine and update it as per the needs of the time. The sources involved in drafting the manifesto reportedly confirmed that India's NFU policy would be reconsidered under the ambiguously worded election promise.⁵⁵ There has not been any

⁵³Laurence Martin, "The determinants of change: Deterrence and technology." *Adelphi Papers* 20, no. 161 (1980): 9-19.

⁵⁴Christopher Clary, and Vipin Narang. "India's counterforce temptations: Strategic dilemmas, doctrine, and capabilities." *International Security* 43, no. 3 (2018): 7-52.

⁵⁵ "BJP Puts 'No First Use' Nuclear Policy in Doubt," Reuters, April 7, 2014, [https://www.reuters.com/article/india-election-bjp-manifesto-](https://www.reuters.com/article/india-election-bjp-manifesto-idINDEEA3605820140407)

[idINDEEA3605820140407](https://www.reuters.com/article/india-election-bjp-manifesto-idINDEEA3605820140407)

development in this regard, and India's nuclear doctrine with an NFU policy remains intact after two terms of the BJP in power. However, Indian officials have been projecting the existing doctrine to be "flexible enough", in the words of former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon, for the first strike against Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.⁵⁶

The idea of such a strike is more nuanced than it seems, considering the operational and tactical challenges associated with the execution. Furthermore, it is still years before India could be confident enough in its holistic capabilities, at least in theory, to proceed with such an endeavor. But as per the Indian strategic understanding, it is a must if Pakistan is to be deterred from using sub-conventional warfare against India. The mobilization of the strike corps in 2001, followed by the development of the Cold Start doctrine, underscores the same realization. However, the failure to implement the Cold Start doctrine after the Mumbai, Pathankot, and Uri attacks, all of which India has attributed to Pakistan, underscores the fact nuclear deterrence is still functional as far as Pakistan is concerned. Indian security analysts have believed that Pakistan has used its nuclear capabilities as cover to continue its interference in Kashmir as the threat of a nuclear war inhibits the chances of a large-scale punitive conventional strike against Pakistan.⁵⁷ India believes that the intrinsic advantage of a larger conventional force over Pakistan has been lost since the latter became a nuclear power. The force build-up capable of executing the first strike and the supportive narrative aligns with the understanding that India desperately intends to diversify its options for the future.

⁵⁶Quoted in Ajai Shukla, "After a Pakistani TNW Strike, India Can Go for Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal: Former NSA Shivshankar Menon," *Business Standard*, March 18, 2017, <http://ajaiashukla.blogspot.com/2017/03/after-pakistani-tnw-strike-india-will.html>.

⁵⁷Kargil Review Committee. *From surprise to a reckoning: the Kargil Review Committee report* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications Pvt. Limited, 2000).

Tactical nuclear weapons, or TNWs, constitute an important piece of the full spectrum deterrence jigsaw. In understanding Pakistan's strategic brass, even if India manages to overcome the operational constraints of the Cold Start doctrine, it would refrain from activating it for fear of a tactical nuclear strike. Since India would need to respond with a massive nuclear strike, per its doctrine, and vice versa, from Pakistan, the exponential escalation would bring an all-out nuclear apocalypse in South Asia. Hence, Pakistan's nuclear deterrence rests on the assumption that rationality calls for respecting Pakistan's territorial sovereignty and refraining from the limited invasion as propagated under the Cold Start doctrine. The deterrence has stood firm under these assumptions so far.⁵⁸ However, the equation might change if India keeps up with the capabilities and intentions to carry out the first strike.

The most crucial component of counterforce targeting is accurate and reliable information about the strategic assets of the adversary. The next step is eliminating as many nuclear warheads as possible with a clean strike to drastically reduce its counter-offensive capabilities. However, since it is nearly impossible to target the entire nuclear cache and to decapitate the adversary completely, an early warning system is needed in case of a retaliatory strike from remnant nuclear forces. Space-based ISR assets are essential, from accurate and actionable information regarding nuclear assets to precision strikes and intercepting residual incoming nuclear missiles. The intelligence gathered through space is complimented by ground and aerial assets such as UAVs.

With the extensive qualitative and quantitative advantage, courtesy of the network of remote sensing and intelligence satellites that India has or plans to send to space soon, it could monitor the

⁵⁸Sandeep Unnithan, "Why India Didn't Strike Pakistan after 26/11," *India Today*, October 14, 2015, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20151026-why-india-didntstrike-pakistan-after-26-11-820634-2015-10-14>

movement of strategic forces. Since the Cold Start doctrine is enshrined upon capturing limited territory in the Punjab province of Pakistan.⁵⁹ Along international borders, through a coordinated thrust, the response in the form of TNWs can be anticipated across a certain region. The continuous surveillance of this region gives India the requisite data for an effective strike against Nasr batteries during the conflict. Indians already believe that the satellite imagery has confirmed where Pakistan has stored its TNWs in the garrisons close to the international border with India.⁶⁰ With first-strike capable delivery systems such as BrahMos, India could be tempted to go ahead with the preemptive strike against Pakistan's TNWs should it consider breaking the strategic paralysis and wage a limited conventional war with Pakistan.

A successful preemptive strike against TNWs also shifts the onus of escalation from India to Pakistan. If Pakistan had stood down, India would have successfully restored the strategic advantage that it wished for since nuclear deterrence changed the equation in 1998. However, if Pakistan chooses escalation and releases the barrage of nuclear missiles, India plans to build a multi-layer BMD system over its major cities.⁶¹ India's Geostationary satellites could be effective for early warning, although the response time could be very limited considering the geographic proximity of both countries. Satellite-based infrared sensors detect the launch of the incoming missile before its trajectory is

⁵⁹Nayan Chanda, "India's Hard Path to Peace With China: Dragon On Our Doorstep: Managing China Through Military Power By Pravin Sawhney and Ghazala Wahab." *Global Asia* 12, no. 1 (2017): 133-133.

⁶⁰Col. Vinayak Bhat (ret.), "Rare Images Show Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Weapons May Be Used against Indian Troops," *The Print*, March 29, 2018, <https://theprint.in/security/rare-images-show-pakistans-tactical-nuclear-weapons-that-may-fail-to-stop-indian-troops/45703/>.

⁶¹Rajat Pandit, "Missile Shield Over Dehli: India May Buy Nasam-II System Air Defense System From The US", *The Times of India*, February 11, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/missile-shield-over-delhi-india-may-buy-nasams-ii-air-defence-system-from-us/articleshow/74071029.cms>

transferred to the designated radar of the BMD system.⁶² Hence, satellites are critical to Indian strategic calculus if Pakistan opts for a counter-value attack after the preemptive strike. On the seafront, Pakistan only has the luxury of diesel-electric submarines that need to resurface more often than SSBN as they need the air to recharge their batteries; hence they are more prone to detection via satellite imagery.

Deterrence is a dynamic concept that keeps evolving and corresponds to the adversary's abilities. Furthermore, mutual vulnerability plays a pivotal role in deterrence stability. The asymmetry between India and Pakistan extends to the realm of space as well, and the space programs of both countries are not even close for comparison. Hence Indian strategic assets are not constantly under surveillance by Pakistan's space-based ISR resources. Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and strategic posture are also not oriented around counterforce or first strike, so India does not face the same vulnerability to balance the deterrence.

India's quest for a constellation of dual-use and military-specific space fleets alongside extensive ballistic missile defence and delivery systems such as nuclear-capable supersonic cruise missiles does not correspond to NFU or credible minimum deterrence. And once the Indian space program reaches the intended level of maturation, along with the technical collaboration with countries like France, Israel and the USA, Pakistan's delivery systems and launch sites will be under round-the-clock surveillance.⁶³ It also boosts India's confidence in a first strike against these installations to prevent Pakistan from striking back during a high-tension standoff. Considering the technological and capacity challenges, Pakistan will likely face the 'use it or lose it' dilemma. Rather

⁶²"Fact Sheet: An Introduction to Ballistic Missile Defense." September 17, 2022. <https://armscontrolcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/An-Introduction-to-Ballistic-Missile-Defense-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf>.

⁶³Amjad Mahmood, and Adil Sultan. "Impact of India's ISR Capabilities on South Asian Security Dynamics." *Strategic Studies* 41, no. 4 (2021).

than the stated intentions or objectives, the capabilities define the deterrence response. As Pakistan has never believed in India's NFU commitment, the cumulative outcome could be drastic. The overall impact of India's strategic build-up, including space based ISR capabilities and complimented by supersonic missiles and ballistic missile defence, will immensely impact the strategic stability in South Asia.

Conclusion

The Indian space program is far ahead in terms of potential and intended objectives compared to Pakistan's space program. It is clear from the existing space assets and plans that it intends to utilize space as a force multiplier in enhancing its offensive and defensive capabilities. So far, Pakistan has managed to deter India from committing to large-scale war, as seen in 1948, 1965 and 1971, proving that nuclear deterrence has worked. However, India believes that Pakistan's nuclear parity is an obstacle since it can no longer coerce its arch-rival and neighbor. The shadow of a nuclear war has made conventional advantage insignificant. To break the strategic paralysis, the force posture that includes a vast network of various categories of satellites in space suggests that India may execute the first strike against the strategic assets of Pakistan to break its resolve or diminish its nuclear capability. India's stated nuclear posture is 'No First Strike'; however, the force build-up suggests that India is building up its capabilities to target as much of Pakistan's strategic assets as possible in a preemptive strike and layering up its major cities with Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) shields to protect them from remnant nuclear warheads. Satellites are key components in this design as they are instrumental in surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence gathering about Pakistan's nuclear assets. They also have a crucial role in early warning and missile interception. Consequently, it creates first-strike instability since Pakistan would have to lower its nuclear threshold per the 'use it or lose it' dilemma, thus increasing the probability of a nuclear conflict in South Asia.

Pakistan and Russia's Convergence of Interests in the Emerging Geopolitical Environment

Muhammad Nawaz Khan¹

Abstract

The changing global environment has become an opportunity for Russia and Pakistan to redefine their relationship. Both countries believe in strong multilateralism as the way to go in foreign relations. They are quite conscious of peace and stability in the Eurasian region. Given the mutual benefits of fostering ties, Moscow and Islamabad are trying to move forward in three key broad areas where the convergence of interests is evident. They are emerging geopolitical and security milieus, geo-economic outlook and regional connectivity. Pakistan-Russia relations are set to exploit these realms and take them on an upward trajectory in years to come. In this paper, qualitative data has been dealt with analytically to identify how both countries could benefit from the changing strategic landscape to achieve these objectives. It pertains to the evolving geopolitical environment, inter-regional economic prospects, and emerging threats to regional stability (especially Afghanistan), which hold much in store for both in opting for a mutual course of action on regional and international fronts. The study explicitly examines the factors that may

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shape the commonality of interests in their foreign policy options.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Eurasia, Grey Zone, Multipolar, Geo-economics, Regional Connectivity, Shanghai Cooperation, Organization

Introduction

Ever-changing global realities influence the regional geopolitical landscape and often lead to new alignments and cooperation among various states. In the same parameter, Moscow and Islamabad have evolved a new understanding in the geo-strategic realm. They are trying to make economics their focal point; in doing so, both countries are well aware of their tangibles and the impact of multilateralism on regional nexus. Russia recognizes Pakistan's strategic significance in the Eurasian region, particularly regarding Afghanistan's stability. Likewise, Pakistan sees Russia as a prospective diplomatic partner in the new era, especially as it moves towards geo-economics. It is eager to cooperate in regional security and "radicalized militancy" including human trafficking and counterterrorism.

In the Eurasian region, Moscow enjoys sizable political clout in its conventional sphere of influence that extends up to the Baltic, the Caucasian and the Central Asian regions. This entire region is aware of Russia's political and economic gravity. Similarly, Russia has always been inclined to explore beyond its immediate security domain to defend its conventional areas of interest, which also cover South Asia (SA).

However, to contain the Russian influence, the US-led Western powers are obsessed with imposing sanctions to curtail Moscow's political and economic muscles. This has led to more flexing of muscles by Russia. The recent sanctions in the wake of the Ukraine crisis have pushed Russia to explore its interests in SA and beyond. Russian desire for sustainable economic development, an assertive foreign policy and comprehensive security compels it to recognize SA to be of vital

importance. It is currently trying to play the delicate balancing act between India and Pakistan.

Russia is facing challenges to chalk out its role in the post-cold war international political order, which is largely dominated by the Western powers.

The country is struggling to create political and economic space to protect its spheres of interest in the multipolar world, where powers like the European Union (EU) and China, as well as the United States, are major actors. Moscow and Islamabad agree on several issues (security and regional integration) pertaining to the region. Both countries aspire to a multipolar world.² In this regard, Moscow wishes to see itself as an influential pillar of a multipolar world. Hence, Islamabad is part of Russia's broader strategy for the Eurasian region.³ The fundamental strategic interest of Islamabad with Moscow is to support the emergence of a multipolar order. Based on a secondary review of academic sources, the study examines how Islamabad and Moscow could benefit from the changing geopolitical landscape to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Pakistan-Russia bilateralism is based on politics, economic and defence and has been studied in the literature. Emerging geopolitical environment, evolving interregional economic prospects, and regional stability are also vital variables that are studied. This study tries to identify how emerging geopolitical and security milieus, geo-economic outlook and regional connectivity shape the commonality of interests in the foreign policy options of the states. The

² Alexey Dedov, "Pakistan-Russia Relations: Is there a New Trajectory?" Islamabad Policy Research Institute, August 11, 2018, <https://ipripak.org/ambassador-lecture-on-pakistan-russia-relations-is-there-a-new-trajectory/> (accessed on January 3, 2022).

³ Tasneem Sultana, Sahar Afshan & Zobi Fatima, "PAK-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE EMERGING GEO-STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT," *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2019): 36-53, 36.

work would contribute to the existing theoretical literature on International Relations (IR).

Convergence in Geopolitical and Security Outlook: An Appraisal

The Russian shift towards Islamabad results from the changing international power structure, such as Moscow's assertiveness in global affairs, the worsening of Washington's relations with it and the quest to counter American influence in the Eurasian region. It seems that Moscow and Islamabad are gradually trying to build relations under geopolitical competition and regional security concerns in Central and South Asia. The emerging regional arrangements in the shape of improving China-Russia relations, United State-India strategic cooperation, mistrust in Pakistan-United State relations, security dynamics of the region, especially in the backdrop of the security situation in Afghanistan in the wake of withdrawal of US forces and reestablishment of Taliban government in Kabul, the rise of Daesh, and seeking alternative markets for Russian trade and defence products are offering avenues to Russia for advancing its engagements with Pakistan. Meanwhile, the importance of Russia for Pakistan lies in its status of being a major power, having immense economic potential, and the right to veto the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as being a leading member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Pakistan is looking for new partners to diversify its foreign policy options. It also wants to ensure support at multilateral forums keeping in view its deteriorating ties with the United States (US). Pakistan and US relations have been a roller-coaster type, and the former has always nursed discontent with the latter over a host of issues. For instance, a year after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, Pakistan was being an allied-ally became the most-sanctioned country in the world due to the shift in the American strategic policy. Owing to the vested interests of the Western powers in the war against terrorism, Pakistan was again obliged, and it was granted the status of a major non-NATO ally by the

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United States. US President George Bush assured that America "will not leave the region once its military objectives are achieved."⁴

Ultimately, Pakistan, under the new understanding of the US, committed its troops. It faced a backlash from the locals and eventually became a victim of terrorism. The nation has rendered huge sacrifices in the US-led war on terrorism. It suffered more than '80,000 casualties'⁵ of civilian and armed forces personnel, and economic losses worth 'US\$ 152 billion'⁶. Contrarily, the US adopted a hard approach towards Pakistan by suspending Coalition Support Fund and military assistance along with tightening conditions for the civilian support program. This generated a repulsive feeling and was tantamount to betrayal. This mistreatment at the hands of the US has pushed Pakistan to diversify its foreign relations and seek viable alternate solutions. Reshaping of Pakistan-Russia relations could offer opportunities to widen Pakistan's foreign policy choices, eventually negating the impression of Pakistan being a US proxy in the region.

In the Eurasian region, the US sees competition with Moscow and Beijing as the next great power rivalry. Anti-Russian sentiments play a key role in US foreign policy. After a protracted era in which counterterrorism dominated US policy, the National Defense Strategy of 2018 strongly emphasized reorienting Pentagon to deal with the Russian

⁴ "President Holds Prime Time News Conference," White House, October 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011011-7.html> (March 12, 2022).

⁵ Imran Khan, "Imran Khan: Don't blame Pakistan for the outcome of the war in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/27/dont-blame-pakistan-outcome-war-afghanistan/> (accessed on January 9, 2022).

⁶ "War on terror has cost Pakistan more than \$150bn in losses since 9/11, officials say," Arab News, August 19, 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1927131/world> (accessed on February 21, 2022).

threat.⁷ It is seen in the context of extending membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) up to the Russian border,⁸ along with activation of the Asia Pacific theatre for competing with Russia and China. The US has established a security arc in Asia. It constituted a strategic partnership with India, Japan, and Australia called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD); Australia, US and UK (AUKUS); Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS); United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Partners in the Blue Pacific [PBP]); and trilateral security cooperation (US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation).

This US-led security paradigm is a major concern for Moscow, and is viewed as a threat from the West. Moscow wants to see a multipolar world as a substitute for the US-led international order. It strives to recast itself as a third power (after China) in global affairs. It also wants to enhance its role in shaping the regional security mosaic. However, Russia does not match the US in pursuing a bigger role in Eurasia. This pushes it to adopt a more limited and flexible approach to counter the US influence in the region.⁹ It is more interested in building partnerships and is seeking to make inroads in the region.

The US realignment in the Asia-Pacific has raised eyebrows in Pakistan's security and academic circles. The member states of Quad are trying to strengthen maritime security amidst piracy and

⁷ Hal Brands, "Pentagon's New Plan to Fight China and Russia in the Gray Zone," *Bloomberg*, October 21, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-10-21/pentagon-s-new-plan-to-fight-china-and-russia-in-the-gray-zone#xj4y7vzkg> (accessed on March 6, 2022).

⁸ "Ukraine conflict: What is Nato and how is it changing?" BCC, June 29, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18023383> (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁹ Hammad Sarfraz, "RUSSIA'S NEW GREAT GAME," *Express Tribute*, November 21, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330338/russias-new-great-game>

counterterrorism challenges.¹⁰ However, China's absence from QUAD raises the question of why the region's most powerful navy is not a part of the maritime security arrangement. India's presence in QUAD and participation in naval exercises signals its growing security role in the region,¹¹ and is projected as a counterweight to China. This development would impact Pakistan's security and economic interests. In view of its economic cooperation with China and the India-US strategic partnership, Pakistan will be seen as a competitor in the Asia Pacific region. Great power competition essentially favors India.

Pakistan has shown its concern that India's role in the great power's competition would destabilize the region. Pakistan considers India's military build-up as a destabilizing factor, which is Pakistan-specific. Military infrastructure development, Forward Operating Bases¹² and a Cold Start Doctrine¹³ proactive military strategy and surgical strikes military tactics would enable India to apply its force from any part of its territory against Pakistan. This would affect the strategic stability of SA, which may spoil the Russian aspiration of multipolar Eurasian connectivity. Likewise, Pakistan's economic interests in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the larger East Asia would also be impacted.

¹⁰ Benjamin Clarke, "Pakistan and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Current and Future Perceptions", *IPRI Journal* vol. XIX, no.1 (Winter 2019): 30-55, 32, 33.

¹¹ Arvind Gupta, "India's Approach to the Asia-Pacific," in *Asian Strategic Review 2014 U.S. Pivot and Asian Security*, ed. S D Muni and Vivek Chadha (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), 215.

¹² "Indian Air Force Stations," *Global Security*, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/airbase.htm#:~:text=Western%20Command%20is%20headquartered%20in,km%20of%20the%20Pakistan%20border>. (accessed on July 21, 2022).

¹³ Hafeez Ullah Khan & Ijaz Khalid, "Indian Cold Start Doctrine: Pakistan's Policy Response," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 55, no. 1, (January - June 2018): 325-341.

Geopolitical Environment and Security Concerns of Central and South Asia

The evolving geo-strategic dynamics in SA are seen in the larger role of New Delhi in the region (making India a net security provider in the Asia Pacific) with the support of the U.S., Islamabad's pursuit for maintaining the delicate strategic equilibrium in the region, and safeguarding its interests in Afghanistan is up for a litmus test. These factors will shape Islamabad's progressive relations with Moscow, which enjoys cordial ties with India. Kremlin is eager to balance its interests and deal with Pakistan and India as per its political and economic interests.¹⁴

Both South Asian countries have their own strength to influence the region's political, economic and security outcomes. Pakistan is a relatively small power but with promising prospects on the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard. The country's leverages are its geography, strong military with nuclear capability and considerable influence in the Islamic world.¹⁵ It has the potential to offer geo-strategic influence in its ties with Russia. Whereas India has a huge territory, a colossal economic market and modernizing military muscle to attract the great powers. India has been a central pillar of Russia's South Asian policy. It does not mean that Russia undermines the geopolitical significance of Pakistan.

In the 21st century, SA experienced two important developments: the resurgence of Russia and Indo-US strategic relations. India is steadily shifting away from relying on Moscow in favor of America. Russia is trying to establish its sphere of influence in the region, whereas the US inclination towards India has disturbed the strategic balance of SA. Russia wants to establish a delicate balance and fill the strategic void in

¹⁴ Brig Feroz Hassan Khan, "Russia-Pakistan Strategic Relations: An Emerging Entente Cordiale," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* (January 2021): 42.

¹⁵ Khan, "Russia-Pakistan Strategic Relations." 42.

the wake of the US exit from Afghanistan. This has provided the desired impetus for Russia to reset its relations with Pakistan.

Russia, in future, may play a proactive role in conflict management between Islamabad and Delhi. Being a great power, it is positioned as an interlocutor. This means it could broker talks among conflicting sides - New Delhi and Islamabad - or among the stakeholders in Afghanistan to improve the regional security setting.¹⁶ Russia and Pakistan believe that improved regional security would provide an opportunity to maximize regional integration in the spheres of North-South and East-West corridors.

The regional security concerns have provided Moscow and Islamabad with a shared reason to reassess their mutual interests. They are keen to enhance military-to-military cooperation with each other, especially in counterterrorism. The security interests have encouraged Moscow to modify its policies by balancing the power equation with Washington and cooperating with Beijing and Islamabad.¹⁷ Given the security situation of SA, Russia has legitimate concerns over the rise of extremism, especially the presence of Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) in the region, which is creating instability in the Russian backyard — Central Asia (CA). Moscow considers the region as its vulnerable southern underbelly and is mindful that stability and a greater sense of security are required on its borders. In reality, the concerns about terrorism are heightened by a potential spillover from the return of foreign terrorist combatants of Central Asian origin from Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that around 5,700 to 7,100 Central Asians, as of 2019, joined the IS in Syria. These militants remain a concern for Moscow and Islamabad due

¹⁶ Sarfraz, "RUSSIA'S NEW GREAT GAME."

¹⁷ Muhammad Imran, Ghulam Mustafa & Gulam Muhammad Nagra, "Regional Dynamics and Russian Security Strategy in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan and India," *Global Regional Review*, 6, no. II (Spring 2019):1-11, 1.

to their hobnobbing with other armed groups in Afghanistan, including al-Qaeda and the IS-K.¹⁸

The rise of the IS-K in Afghanistan is worrisome for Moscow and Islamabad. The fear is that these extra-regional forces will possibly hire the services of IS-K as a proxy to destabilize both countries. This perception is solidified in the wake of increasing terrorist incidents, especially in Pakistan, after the return of the Afghan Taliban in Kabul. Eventually, the regional security environment of Central and South Asia in the post-withdrawal of Western forces in Afghanistan has moved Pakistan and Russia closer to each other.

After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, many analysts believe that the Central Asian governments' top priority is to preserve stability and protect the security of their nations. This has resulted in a greater Russian security presence in CA and redefining counterterrorism cooperation between Central Asian countries and the US.¹⁹ Eventually, geopolitical competition continues in the region. Russian interests in the region intersect with the US in the face of a post-2021 regional security environment. The nature of US engagement with Central Asian countries is possibly being redefined in the backdrop of the return of the Taliban. Washington will likely persuade the Central Asian states to enhance their relations with it and act as a counterweight to Moscow's regional influence.²⁰ It would challenge the assertive Russian position in Central Asia. Therefore, Moscow has to ensure its stronger presence in the region by retaining its troops stationed in parts of Central Asia.²¹ And at the same time, improving ties with the Taliban.

¹⁸ Maria A. Blackwood, "Central Asia: Background and US Relations," Congressional Research Service, September 24, 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46924> (accessed on February 6, 2022)

¹⁹ Blackwood, "Central Asia."

²⁰ Blackwood, "Central Asia."

²¹ Sarfraz, "RUSSIA'S NEW GREAT GAME."

Uncertain Outlook of Regime Stability in Afghanistan

The future of Afghanistan provides a foundation for the convergence of interests between Russia and Pakistan. Both countries are convinced that Washington's Afghanistan strategy has been unable to achieve the desired results to establish peace in the war-torn country, particularly in the region. They agree that political reconciliation among all the Afghan factions is the only way out for durable peace in Afghanistan. Therefore, regime stability in Afghanistan is of essential importance to Islamabad and Moscow, along with Eurasian security and economic coordination. Afghanistan is located precisely in the middle of many threats to both the countries' common objectives.²² The primary concerns of Islamabad and Moscow, following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, are maintaining stability and ensuring their own countries' security, respectively. Moreover, refugee influx and the spread of Islamic State are other immediate challenges.²³

Pakistan and Russia have a consensus that Central and South Asia's political and economic stability is closely linked to the security situation of Afghanistan. Due to rising insecurity in Afghanistan, their desire for regional integration has suffered greatly. It is believed that any change in Afghanistan will simultaneously impact the region. An end to insecurity in Afghanistan is bound to stabilize the region. Therefore, Moscow and Islamabad have proactively engaged in mutual consultations for the last few years to find methods for facilitating Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace processes. Such facilitation has provided strategic space for both countries to adopt a common approach to establish relative peace in the broader Eurasian region.

²² "Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics after September 11," Directorate of National Intelligence, April 18-19, 2002, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/afghanistan_2002.pdf (accessed February 3, 2022).

²³ Blackwood, "Central Asia."

Pakistan's efforts with the cooperation of Russia and China, were evident in holding an International Afghanistan Peace Conference in Moscow on April 14, 2017.²⁴ Pakistan has also facilitated the US-led peace process to keep its options open.

Russia is worried about possible instability in Afghanistan, and it wants to find a role in shaping the region's politics independent of the US influence.²⁵ It is apparent in the Moscow Framework on Afghanistan,²⁶ participated by Afghan Taliban, Afghan opposition, China, Pakistan, US and others, which deliberated various ways and means to reach reconciliation among the Afghan stakeholders and to find a path for ensuring a stable government in Afghanistan.²⁷ The initiative is perceived as an important step in finding a regional solution for an inclusive government in Afghanistan. Participation of Afghan Taliban and others in Moscow for peace talks has positioned Russia as a peace negotiator.

Pakistan likewise, calls on world powers to constructively engage with the new Kabul government. If the global community makes the Taliban a pariah in the region, it would experience a backlash in the form of migration and terrorism spill over to the Pakistani side. Pakistan is coordinating with the world to figure out an appropriate time to recognize the Taliban. The Taliban, too, are trying hard to convince the international community to grant it legitimacy. This provides an

²⁴ "International Afghanistan Peace Conference starts in Moscow," *Express Tribune*, April 14, 2017.

²⁵ Muhammad Nawaz Khan, "Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism," *IPRI Journal*, vol. XIX, no. 1, (Winter 2019): 56-85, 73, 80.

²⁶ Georgi Asatryan, "The Russian perspective on the Afghanistan situation post US withdrawal," Observer Research Foundation, June 19, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-russian-perspective-on-the-afghanistan-situation-post-us-withdrawal/> (accessed on June 21, 2022).

²⁷ "Intra-Afghan' talks in Moscow, Taliban to take part," *China Daily*, February 4, 2019, <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/articles/44/83/28/1549269453952.html> (accessed on June 30, 2022).

opportunity for the international community to engage with the Taliban to establish leverage over them. Such an opportunity should not be missed. If the world abandons Afghanistan again, there will be a security vacuum that terrorists and non-state actors will surely fill in.

Pakistan is hoping for an inclusive government and respect for human rights keeping in view the Afghan's cultural sensitivity, and providing economic and governance support to avoid a collapse. However, there is a fear that a new conflict may erupt, which could lead to a humanitarian crisis. Islamabad has been vocal that the engagement with the Taliban's government benefits the international community. This modus operandi of engaging the Taliban will influence them to form an inclusive government, ensuring respect for human rights and avoiding a humanitarian crisis.

Counterterrorism and the impact of the US war against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan brought Moscow into a closer relationship with Islamabad. It sets Moscow more determined on the path of security, political, and economic integration with Islamabad.²⁸ The post-withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan has offered a huge prospect for Russia and Pakistan to act rationally under their common security interests, specifically Afghanistan and terrorism.

Grey Zone Threats to Pakistan and Russia

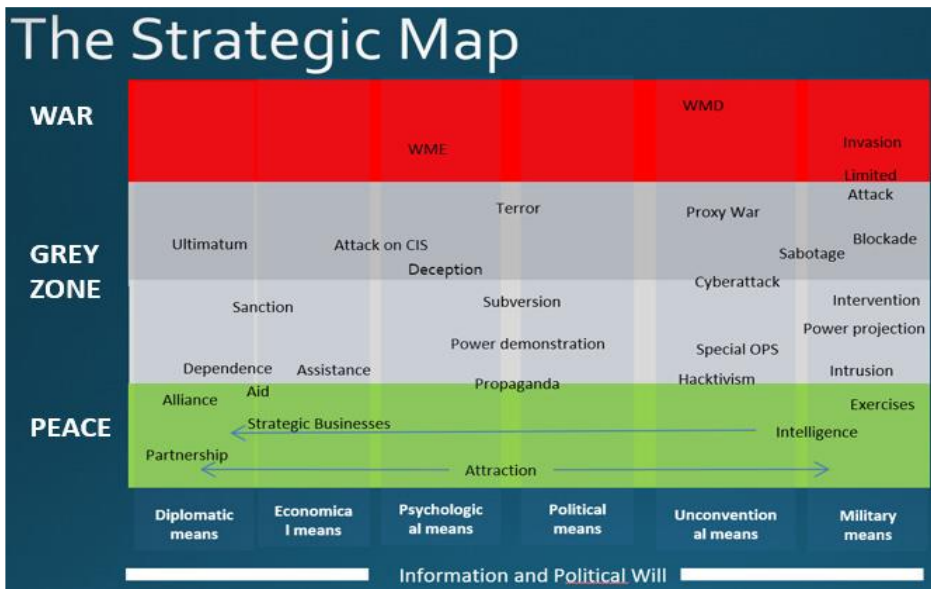
The term "grey zone" refers to a broad range of activities, including irregular, hybrid and proxy warfare; cyber-attacks; disinformation campaigns; brinkmanship tactics, acts of sabotage, and disruption of critical services;²⁹ which consistently pose short or long-term threats.

²⁸ "Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics," Directorate of National Intelligence."

²⁹ Lt General Dushyant Singh, "Grey Zone Threats – Implications on Force Structuring," SP's Land Forces, Issue 6, 2020, <https://www.spslandforces.com/story/?id=736&h=Grey-Zone-Threats-Implications-on-Force-Structuring> (accessed on January 21, 2022).

The space between peace and war, also known as the "grey zone," has significantly grown in modern warfare. Figure -1 illustrates a vast range of strategic tools and instruments broken down into six categories such as diplomatic, economic, psychological, political, unconventional and military means³⁰ that could endanger the nation's security.

Figure – 1



Source: Mikael Weissmann, "Hybrid warfare and hybrid threats today and tomorrow: towards an analytical framework," *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2019): 17–26.

Gray zone warfare is a new phenomenon which is increasingly posing a threat to the state’s internal and external security.³¹ There are three

³⁰ Mikael Weissmann, "Hybrid warfare and hybrid threats today and tomorrow: towards an analytical framework," *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2019): 17–26, 21.

³¹ Hal Brands, "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone," Foreign Policy Research Institute, February 5, 2016, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/02/paradoxes-gray-zone/> (accessed on May 9, 2022).

general levels of gray zone activities such as aggressive actions, moderate actions and persistent actions.³² Threat to territorial integration qualifies the definition of aggressive actions. The violation of the Line of Control (LoC) by the Indian aircraft, along with releasing the payload in haste near Balakot in 2019³³ is a blatant example of Indian aggression. Furthermore, India's state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, in order to strategically suffocate the latter to an extent that it becomes an unviable state,³⁴ also falls in the same category.

Direct action in the form of non-military actions (no immediate threat to territorial integrity), such as lawfare, is considered under the category of moderate action in the grey-zone. Putting Pakistan's name on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)³⁵ and using the FATF platform as a political tool against Pakistan comes under the second level of warfare in the grey-zone. Disinformation campaigns that caused the defamation of Pakistan are considered the techniques of persistent actions in the grey-zone. For instance, Pakistan's 104th rank among 167 nations on Democracy Index 2021,³⁶ and its classification as a hybrid regime despite the fact that Pakistan is in the process of consolidating democracy; and placing the country's name in the Security

³² Lyle J. Morris, Michael J. Mazarr, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, *Marta Kempe, Gaining Comparative Advantages in the Gray Zone* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation), xvi.

³³ "Balakot: Indian air strikes target militants in Pakistan," *BBC News*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47366718> (accessed on May 30, 2022).

³⁴ Adeela Naureen and Umar Waqar, "Indian subversion in Pakistan a lost cause," *Express Tribune*, July 13, 2020.

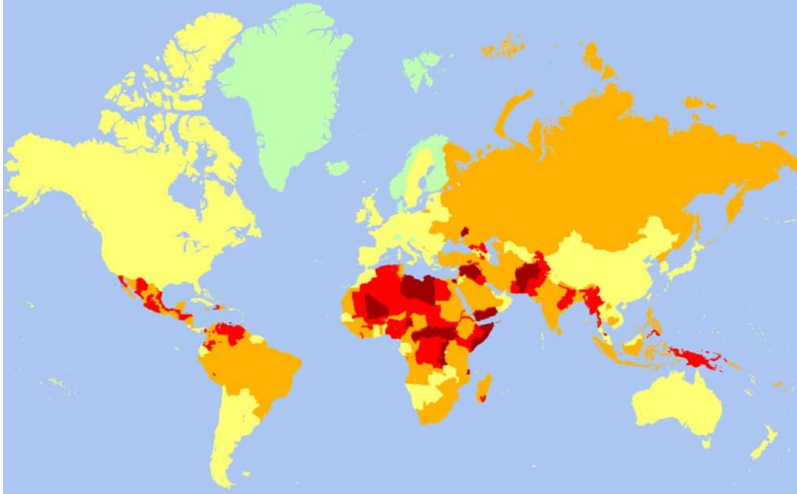
³⁵ "Pakistan launches diplomatic effort to get out of FATF grey list: Report," *Business Standard*, June 14, 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/pakistan-launches-diplomatic-effort-to-get-out-off-fatf-grey-list-report-](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/pakistan-launches-diplomatic-effort-to-get-out-off-fatf-grey-list-report-122061400374_1.html#:~:text=Pakistan%20has%20been%20on%20the,complete%20it%20by%20October%202019)

[122061400374_1.html#:~:text=Pakistan%20has%20been%20on%20the,complete%20it%20by%20October%202019](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/pakistan-launches-diplomatic-effort-to-get-out-off-fatf-grey-list-report-122061400374_1.html#:~:text=Pakistan%20has%20been%20on%20the,complete%20it%20by%20October%202019). (accessed on July 6, 2022).

³⁶ Rehan Piracha, "Pakistan Ranked 104th Among 167 Nations On Democracy Index 2021," *VoicePk*, February 12, 2022, <https://voicepk.net/2022/02/pakistan-ranked-104th-among-167-nations-on-democracy-index-2021/> (accessed on May 21, 2022).

Risk Zones as per International SOS in terms of the law-and-order situation, political violence and COVID situation³⁷ (see figure -2) are some examples of persistent actions of the grey-zone warfare.

Figure - 2



Source: PETER, "RANKED: MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD 2022," Atlas & Boots, January 2, 2022, <https://www.atlasandboots.com/travel-blog/most-dangerous-countries-in-the-world/>(accessed on June 6, 2022).

Similarly, Russia is also a victim of the gray zone warfare by the West, which is using similar tactics as part of its efforts to uphold unilateralism in the world. For instance, the US and European countries are engaged in strategic competition with Russia that is being played out in the gray zone, in which tactics such as psychological warfare, economic sanctions, military threats through NATO exercises near Russian borders, subversion of political systems and covert information operations are being used to undermine the Russian political system. Russia considers criticism of its human rights by the Western powers as

³⁷ PETER, "RANKED: MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD 2022," Atlas & Boots, January 2, 2022, <https://www.atlasandboots.com/travel-blog/most-dangerous-countries-in-the-world/> (June 6, 2022).

a pretext for regime change, and this is part of realpolitik.³⁸ It is argued that the US and Europe are using gray zone methods to express dissatisfaction with their inability to counter Russia's growing influence, particularly their policy failure in Afghanistan and Eastern Europe. In response to such tactics, Russia is trying to gain political influence in its conventional sphere of influence and beyond. Thus, Pakistan and Russia are the victims of warfare in the gray zone. The national security advisers of both countries have been highlighting and discussing the same common security issues, stressing cooperation in defence, space, cyber security, nuclear and intelligence-sharing domains.³⁹

Multilateralism an Agent of Building Common Understanding

Pakistan's relations with Russia may render Islamabad diplomatic support in reinforcing its strength at multilateral fronts, involving the Heart of Asia Conference and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), etc. The growing relations with Russia would help Pakistan evolve a regional approach at multilateral fora. In this regard, the SCO provides a major platform for Islamabad and Moscow to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism.⁴⁰ Both countries believe that the solution for regional problems rests in an increased role of SCO,⁴¹ which provides an opportunity for Islamabad to further close its relations with Moscow and Beijing. Undoubtedly, SCO objectives could not be realized without

³⁸ Sarfraz, "RUSSIA'S NEW GREAT GAME."

³⁹ Sana Jamal, "Pakistan, Russia discuss counterterrorism, Cybersecurity Cooperation," *Gulf News*, December 2, 2021, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-russia-discuss-counterterrorism-cybersecurity-cooperation-1.84119969> (accessed on June 30, 2022); & Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan, Russia Hold High-Level Security Talks," *Voice of America*, April 23, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-russia-hold-high-level-security-talks/4361453.html> (accessed August 12, 2022).

⁴⁰ Imran, Mustafa and Nagra, "Regional Dynamics and Russian Security Strategy in South Asia," 5.

⁴¹ Imran, Mustafa and Nagra, "Regional Dynamics and Russian Security Strategy in South Asia," 5.

regional cooperation. The organization is an appropriate forum to further improve Pakistan and Russia relations by forging common positions on various issues of mutual interest, including drug and human trafficking, cross-border organized crimes and terrorism.

Russia's significance for Pakistan lies in the former's strong credentials as a regional and world power, its leading role in SCO and the privileged right to veto at the UNSC. Besides, Moscow's policy is to deal with Pakistan and India on merit and expects both countries to respect the charter of the SCO. It is evident in the Russian refusal of India to bring the Pulwama issue to the SCO platform.⁴² Although premature, SCO with China and Russia, as founding members, can play a mediatory role between Pakistan and India. SCO also provides Pakistan with an opportunity to evolve its regional policy by improving relationships in the neighborhood and lessening its dependence on allies far afield. Being an active member of SCO, Pakistan can become a bridge in boosting relationships between the organization's member states. Strong ties between them can significantly impact the Eurasian region's strategic landscape and enhance the security of more than half of humankind. Islamabad's efforts against terrorism are outstanding, and SCO members can benefit from its expertise in combating the three evils mentioned above.⁴³

Over the years, the SCO's activities have expanded to include increased military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism drills. Today, the SCO has become a significant regional organization that launched several anti-terrorism initiatives. Establishment of Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATS) in 2021 was an important step in this

⁴² Khan, "Russia–Pakistan Strategic Relations." 48.

⁴³ Imran, Mustafa and Nagra, "Regional Dynamics and Russian Security Strategy in South Asia," 6.

regard, which is a permanent acting agency of the organization.⁴⁴ The regional security module is put into practice as the SCO members have conducted joint military exercises such as "Peace Mission" to enhance the organization's capability and capacity in an endeavor to deal with terrorism and to combat transnational organized crimes and drug smuggling.⁴⁵ To overcome these security dilemmas, SCO plays a critical role in creating a conducive environment for regional development.

Besides traditional security threats, the SCO region also faces big non-traditional security challenges such as food deficiency, incursions, refugees, illegal immigrants and natural disasters. The issues of non-traditional threats need to be addressed through regional cooperation. Additionally, in the backdrop of the US security umbrella in the Asia Pacific, the SCO members (Pakistan, China and Russia) come even close to protecting their common interests from being exploited by external powers. Ensuring regional security and stability is a focal point of cooperation among the members, as trans-border security threats call for an effective collective response. The complex interdependency of regional security encourages Russia and Pakistan, and other regional players to make SCO an effective multilateral organization to address the common threats.

Convergence in Geo-economic Outlook

Globally, geopolitics drives geo-economics to achieve the states' intersecting interests. Pakistan and Russia are the victims of such an environment, which offers an opportunity for exploring more avenues

⁴⁴ "Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO-RATS) Legal Experts meeting from 23-25 May 2018 in Islamabad," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 25, 2018, <https://mofa.gov.pk/shanghai-cooperation-organization-regional-anti-terrorist-structure-sco-rats-legal-experts-meeting-from-23-25-may-2018-in-islamabad/> (accessed September 3, 2022).

⁴⁵ "Pakistan Army participated in 'Peace Mission joint exercise in Russia," Express Tribune. September 22, 2021.

under the multilateral economic space to protect their shared geo-economic interests. Politically, Russia seems to be convinced that the global political system of unipolarity enables the US (sole superpower) to interfere in the national borders of any country. The system is a hurdle in global economic progress through political victimization, as evident in the case of US-led European sanctions against Russia.

This compels Russia to understand the importance of the linkage between economic power and political order. The emerging power hubs find their political space in the new world order.⁴⁶ They will be able to translate their economic power into a political one and turn the global political system into a multipolar world.⁴⁷ An assertive Russia with its initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Collective Security Treaty Organization, the rise of China with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the establishment of organizations like Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS 2006⁴⁸), and SCO 2001⁴⁹ are potential indicators to provide an alternative system of multipolarity. The military role of Russia in Syria and Ukraine is a case in point.

Diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions by the West have compelled Russia to shift its political and economic focus more towards Asia than Europe. Russia is exploring more eastern markets for its energy, and Pakistan is one of the potential markets. The Pakistani government is considering buying cheaper oil from Russia due to its severe fuel deficit and continuous economic woes. The Ministry of Energy, Power Division of Pakistan, has asked industrial experts to

⁴⁶ The new world order is considered to be based on the principle of inclusive development through regional integration and cooperation.

⁴⁷ Dr Nazir Hussain and Khurshid Ali Sangay, "The Russian Resurgence and South Asian Region," *IPRI Journal*, vol. XII, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 15-34, 21.

⁴⁸ Eva Gross, "BRICS – what's in a name?" Institute for Security Studies, 2013, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief_44_BRICS.pdf (accessed on January 27, 2022).

⁴⁹ Amna Ejaz Rafi, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Regional Security," *Journal of Current Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2018): 100-116, 102.

provide analysis for importing oil from Russia.⁵⁰ Pakistan is open to the idea of buying oil at discounted rates from Russia, provided it insulates itself from international sanctions.⁵¹

Although Russia has unwavering relations with Central Asia, its influence is being contested against other powers like the US and Europe. Russia is trying to keep these powers out of the region. Whereas, the US and Europe intend to contain Moscow's influence while constructing and financing the energy pipelines that would meet their goals to dominate energy reserves of the CA."⁵² Moscow is the main energy exporter to Europe. While attempting to diminish the Russian energy monopoly, Washington has criticized Russian-led energy projects, including Nord Stream-II and South Stream, to keep them away from European markets. The US support "to the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline project is also part of that move."⁵³ It aims to reduce Russian energy leverage through the geopolitics of energy pipelines. Likewise, the EU attempts to increase its relations with Eurasian states through political association and economic integration.⁵⁴ Pipeline politics emerges as an important aspect of the New Great Game that negatively impacts the region.

⁵⁰ "Islamabad mulls to procure Russian oil," *News International*, June 29, 2022.

⁵¹ "Pakistan open to buying cheap oil from Russia if no sanctions imposed: Minister," *Energy World*, June 30, 3, 2022

⁵² Qamar Fatima and Sumera Zafar, "New Great Game: Players, Interests, Strategies and Central Asia," *Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 29, no.2 (July - December 2014): 623-652, 623.

⁵³ Zafar Bhutta, "North-South pipeline: Pakistan, Russia reach LNG price accord," *Express Tribune*, December 1, 2016, & also see; Zafar Bhutta, "\$2b North-South pipeline: Pakistan asks Russia to further cut LNG supply fee," *Express Tribune*, February 11, 2017.

⁵⁴ "Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Georgia are part of the Eastern Partnership initiative under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)." "Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with EU" "Armenia signed Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on November 24, 2017." For this, see;

Central Asia is located at the junction of another emerging power, China. The Chinese engagement with the Central Asian states offers Russia equal cooperation and competition. Russia and China “share a common aspiration to compete for the Western-dominated world political order.”⁵⁵ However, capturing of Central Asian markets by Chinese companies in the fields of “electronics; telecommunications; hydrocarbon exploration and drilling capacities; manufacturing; and weaponry” are creating competition for Russian companies.⁵⁶ Moscow realizes that the economic development of Central Asia is vital, for which Chinese investment is crucial, but not at the cost of affecting Russian business interests. Still, Russia and China share a common desire for regional and global economic expansion through the integration of Asia and Europe. Bruno Maçães, in his book “*Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order*”, believes that the world is entering the second stage of globalization where the economy is playing an important role in assimilating Europe and Asia.⁵⁷

In this regard, China’s BRI and Russia’s EAEU would contribute to complementing a supercontinent that gives a new meaning to the Eurasia age. This encourages Russia and China to cooperate and accommodate each other's interests and sensitivities in CA. Therefore,

“Eastern Partnership,” European Neighborhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership_en ; Dr Anna Zygierewicz, “Association agreements between the EU and Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine: European Implementation Assessment,” European Parliament, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621833/EPRS_STU\(2018\)621833_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621833/EPRS_STU(2018)621833_EN.pdf)

⁵⁵ Paul Stronski, and Nicole Ng, “Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 28, 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_331_Stronski_Ng_Final1.pdf (accessed on July 27, 2022).

⁵⁶ Stronski, and Nicole, “Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China.”

⁵⁷ Bruno Makes, *Dawn of Eurasia: On the trail of the New World Order* (Penguin Random House, 2018), 320. 5.

in May 2015, Russia and China concluded a joint declaration on cooperation in aligning the BRI with the EAEU.⁵⁸ Moscow has the potential to tie up knots between the EAEU and BRI. In turn, it may offer Islamabad an opportunity to undertake an institutional arrangement with EAEU for promoting Moscow's commercial interests in Pakistan and vice versa.

The Pakistan-Russia economic rapprochement is gradually being cemented under the interregional economic imperatives, involving transnational mega projects like the BRI and its pilot project China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), "EurAsEC (Eurasian Economic Community) and EAEU," the "Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation,"⁵⁹ and "Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline (IP)."⁶⁰ Such measures have been projected in both Russia and Pakistan as the medium to promote regional integration. Pakistan's geo-strategic location is central to restoring the Silk Route and Eurasian integration.⁶¹ It appears that the strategists in Moscow have started believing not to disregard Pakistan's phenomenal significance in Pan-Eurasian assimilation that attracts Russia to aspire to become a part of the CPEC project. Moscow's backing of the CPEC is manifested as Russia's former ambassador to Pakistan, Alexey Y. Dedov's said, "Russia 'strongly' supports CPEC, as it is important for Pakistan's economy and regional connectivity."⁶²

⁵⁸ Guihai Guan, "Thirty years of China–Russia strategic relations: achievements, characteristics and prospects," *China International Strategy Review*, vol. 4 (2022): 21–38.

⁵⁹ "Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors," Asian Development Bank, September 2017, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/48404/48404-002-rrp-en.pdf> (accessed February 9, 2022).

⁶⁰ Almas Haider Naqvi and Yasir Masood, "Rejuvenating Pakistan-Russia Relations: Discernable Trends and Future," *Strategic Studies*, 18-38, 25.

⁶¹ Nawaz Khan, "Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux." 68; also see Yasir Masood, "Rekindled Pak-Russia relations," *Express Tribune*, August 9, 2016.

⁶² Sachin Parashar, "Russia supports China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project: Russian envoy Alexey Y. Dedov," *Economic Times*, December 19, 2016,

Moscow and Islamabad believe these transnational mega projects are laying the foundation for regional connectivity. In this regard, Pakistan is crucial to Eurasian integration, and its geo-strategic location plays a vital role in the BRI initiative and EAEU. Pakistan seeks to promote regional connectivity and intraregional cooperation in Central and South Asia.⁶³ The connectivity provides an opportunity to transform the area into a regional economic zone by establishing business and transportation routes.⁶⁴ Islamabad is trying to increase its geo-economic importance, boosted by the fast-developing CPEC, the flagship project of the BRI.⁶⁵ Islamabad offers access to China and Central Asian states to the Arabian Sea for their trade transit. The country may provide the same to Russia, while the US is trying to contain the influence of both countries.

Conclusion

Pakistan-Russia relations are set to exploit the current convergence of interests and take them on an upward trajectory. Several opportunities exist in front of them, and the probability of employing all potential areas is indispensable. The changing geo-strategic environment in the Eurasian region outlines new alignments that have provided an opportunity for Moscow and Islamabad to work together for regional peace and security. Both countries see their strategic, political and economic interests converging in the light of regional security milieu and interregional cooperation. Both countries have opted for multilateralism as the way to go. This denominator of furthering regional cooperation

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/russia-supports-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-project-russian-envoy-alexey-y-dedov/articleshow/56037725.cms> (accessed on April 3, 2022).

⁶³ Blackwood, "Central Asia."

⁶⁴ "Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics," Directorate of National Intelligence."

⁶⁵ Khan, "Russia–Pakistan Strategic Relations." 42-43.

also pitches them on the global horizon as interactive partners, and the SCO is a case in point.

Russia is becoming assertive in global affairs, and its reappearance in SA is correlated to its rapid economic reclamation, political firmness, robust geopolitics, and credible diplomatic influence in the international setting. Russian interests in the region are based on political and economic dynamics of the region in the wake of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, keeping intact its relations with India despite its growing relations with the US, but more importantly, on the signs of fading the US role in Pakistan and security requirements, especially in the backdrop of countering terrorism. The presence of Daesh in Afghanistan has equally raised security concerns for Moscow to seek enhanced cooperation with Islamabad. Though the challenges to Pakistan and Russia relations are really a hard nut to crack, the new geopolitical realities hold much in store for both in opting for a mutual course of action on regional and international fronts.

Pakistan should focus more on strong regional bilateralism and, at the same time, be part of an assertive multilateralism. A bilateral understanding with Moscow should be counterterrorism-specific, and it should encompass concerns in the broader region, especially Afghanistan. Moscow's generous understanding of Islamophobia can act as a tool in convincing the West to strike a rational approach to extremism. On Trans-regional affairs, the triangular cooperation of Pakistan with China and Russia is imperative for regional security, which will act as a deterrent in checking US hegemony in the region. CPEC may be extended to embrace Russia, enhancing Pakistan's value as a transit country. More Russian input should be sought in making CPEC a success. This will help convince India to act rationally and not bully Pakistan. Mending fences with India need to be routed through good Russian offices to promote geo-economics. Cooperation between Pakistan and Russia in the defence arena may be enhanced, as well as in sharing of intelligence. There is a dire need for further expanding

security cooperation in conflict resolutions, information sharing and joint military exercises.

There is a need to deepen regional security cooperation by developing a consensus among the SCO countries. An explicit aim should be to normalize Afghanistan and make it a buffer of peace. SCO may develop a regional mechanism to overcome non-traditional threats. Awareness of non-traditional threats should be promoted through joint seminars and conferences between the SCO member states so that these issues can be prioritized in policymaking. Hybrid warfare ought to be on the agenda of the SCO's forthcoming summit, especially in the wake of crises and propaganda over Ukraine.

Russia should become a major focal point of Pakistan's foreign interaction in the region, and relations with it be buoyed in all spheres, including education and cultural interaction. People-to-people contact between Russia and Pakistan is crucial for cementing the growing relations between both countries. Pakistan should diversify its tangibles at home, especially human and natural resources, and market them vibrantly as the region needs raw materials and skilled talent.

Post-2019 Spike in Terrorism: A Threat to Internal Security of Pakistan

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Dr. Arshad Mahmood²

Abstract

The post-2019 period is a crucial timeframe in the context of the reappearance of Tehrik -e- Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) and other militant groups and the consequent rise of terrorist incidents in Pakistan. This paper aims to investigate the significant growth of terrorism in Pakistan as a threat to the country's internal security in the aforementioned era. This paper presents the concepts of internal security from the broader perspective of human and state security. The authors employ the situational method of qualitative approach encompassing various events and situations causing the intensity of terrorism in Pakistan in this phase covering two and half years (from January 2020 to June 2022). The concept of internal security is the perception of an act of keeping peace and maintaining law and order within the borders of a sovereign state by upholding the national law and defending against internal security

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threats. Besides the increasing number of terror attacks and casualties as compared with the previous years, this period is additionally important due to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of Afghan Taliban to the power corridors of the war-ravaged country, ostensibly with high hopes of controlling terrorism in the region, affecting security situation in Pakistan as well. It has been identified that terrorism in the country during 2020 had increased compared to the year 2019, and there was a sharp rise in 2021 and 2022, reinforcing a threat to the country's internal security.

Keywords: Terrorism, Extremism, Pakistan, Threat, Internal Security

Introduction

The waves of terrorism noticeably increased in Pakistan from 2020 to 2022 compared to its significant gradual reduction from 2015 to 2019 in the country. The accessible data acknowledged that in the year 2020, there had been a rise in the tally of terrorist incidents and terror-related deaths compared to the previous year. Such figures grew up in 2021 and 2022, respectively.³ Pakistan has faced the menace of terrorism since the 1970s and 1980s, the eras of a disputed jihad in Afghanistan and a crucial growth of religious extremists in Pakistan. In the 1990s, the post-cold war and in the 2000s, the post 9/11 eras, Pakistan continued to confront violent extremism and terrorism perpetrated by the Afghan's jihad inspired extremist militant groups. The literature criticizes Pakistani rulers for their negligence of the rapid growth of violent

³"Datasheet – Pakistan," SATP. Available at: <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan> (Accessed on August 02, 2022).

extremism causing terrorism in the country.⁴ The post-9/11 period is vital as Pakistan's participation in the war on terror led by the US resulted in a strong reaction of religious fanatic elements involved in violent activism in the country.⁵ Apart from religious extremism, Baloch violent separatism has also gained momentum since the killing of Akbar Bugti, the former governor of Balochistan, in 2006.⁶ An author asserted that the current militancy in Balochistan surfaced due to attempts of the state to build new military cantonments and other mega-development projects in the province.⁷ Consequently, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and some other separatist groups have been involved in terrorism, including attacks on security forces and civilians from other ethnicities based in the province.

A significant reduction in terrorism in Pakistan was observed in mid of the 2000s due to military campaigns - a comprehensive military operation, "Zarb-e-Azb" in 2014, followed by another counterterrorism strategy, "Radul Fassad" in 2017. This decline in terrorism was pronounced till 2019, but 2020 witnessed a considerable upsurge in terrorism manifested in different parts of the country. There was a further sharp rise in 2021 and 2022, reinforcing a threat to the country's internal security. Therefore, the post-2019 period is a crucial timeframe

⁴Khurshid Khan and Afifa Kiran, "Emerging Tendencies of Radicalization in Pakistan: A Proposed Counter-Radicalization Strategy," *Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (2012): 20–43. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48529358> (Accessed on August 02, 2022).

⁵John Braithwaite and Bina D'Costa, "Mapping Conflicts in Pakistan: State in Turmoil," *In Cascades of Violence: War, Crime and Peacebuilding Across South Asia*, 271–320. (ANU Press, 2018), 271, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22h6r7h.13> (Accessed on August 03, 2022).

⁶Gazdar Haris, "Bugti and the Baloch Cause," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 39 (2006): 4100–4101, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4418743> (Accessed on August 15, 2022).

⁷Sajjad Akhtar, "Balochistan versus Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 45/46 (2007): 73–79, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40276835> (Accessed on August 04, 2022).

in the context of the consequent rise of terrorist incidents impacting the internal security of Pakistan. This is the period of reappearance of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), having supra-state and supra-national ideology in concert with other terrorist groups in Pakistan. According to a section of scholarly work, the resurgence of terrorist activities in Pakistan bears testimony to the fact that the state could not achieve the total goals of the counter-terrorist actions in the country.⁸

The post-2019 era is additionally important due to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of the Afghan Taliban (AT) to the power corridors of the war-ravaged country, affecting the security situation in Pakistan as well. This paper aims to investigate the significant growth of terrorism in Pakistan as a threat to the country's internal security in the aforementioned era. The primary intention of this study is to systematically analyze the events concerning the rise of terrorism and its threats to various dimensions of internal security of the country in the stated period (2020-2022). Since the main subject of the study is new waves of terrorism as a threat to Pakistan's internal security, this paper presents the concepts of internal security from the broader perspective of human and state security.

Literature Review

The disparity in the existing literature on the research theme was also among the important reasons for choosing this topic, as there was less attention in current scientific works on the subject of the mounting terrorist waves threatening related security aspects in Pakistan. Literature on terrorism in Pakistan mainly focused on underlying causes of religious extremism and terrorism, socio-economic disparities fueling

⁸Shahzeb Ali Rathore, "Pakistan," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 1 (2017): 51–55.

terrorism, weaknesses of civilian institutions like the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and other governance issues. Some of the literature analyzed the rise of terrorism till mid of the second half of the 2000s when the State of Pakistan decided to launch comprehensive operations against the terrorists. About the fast spread of terrorism till mid of the second half of the 2000s, an article endorsed that Pakistan ranked third among the top five countries with 82% terrorist activities in the world in 2014.⁹ There are many other research articles covering the studies on rising terrorism in Pakistan till mid of the second decade of the 2000s.

In particular, there is negligible attention by scholars towards the rise of terror activism and its threats to the internal security of Pakistan in the post-2019 timeframe. For instance, quoting then Foreign Minister Qureshi having a claim of Indian funding to the militant groups in Pakistan, an author admitted the seriousness of the situation concerning terrorism in the country in 2020, but this piece of the literature did not cover the broader scenario of rising terrorism in the post-2019 era.¹⁰ This academic work has underlined the gravity of non-traditional security threats for the country and its institutions with novel challenges. The existing literature acknowledges the rise of terrorist incidents in 2020 and ahead, but the severity of threats to internal security has not been clearly identified. Madiha Afzal, a Pakistani scholar, alluded that a spike in terrorism was registered in the post-2019 timeframe, partially touching upon foreign policy concerns linked with terrorism in Pakistan and the region. The author also highlighted some regional dynamics fueling terrorism and international pressures being applied on Pakistan through tools like Financial Action Task Force

⁹Sajjad Haider, Carmen de P. Heredero, Munir Ahmed and Sumaira Dustgeer, "Identifying Causes of Terrorism in Pakistan," *The Dialogue X*, no.3 (2015): 220-236.

¹⁰Rakhshanda Iqbal, "Sources of Terrorism Financing in Pakistan and Pakistan's Efforts to Stamp out those Sources," *Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research* 3, no. 1 (2021): 87-111.

(FATF).¹¹ Particularly covering terrorism trends in Pakistan, Hassan Abbas, a Pakistani scholar based in the US, highlighted causes of radicalization and socio-economic disparities fanning extremism and terrorism and criticized "Pakistan's lacklustre" approach to counterterrorism.¹² Although his findings do not reflect the timeframe being reviewed yet, his perspective is critical for understanding underlying causes fluctuating with various triggers, either in the form of domestic factors and regional constraints or systemic pressures. The literature though endorsed the spiraling effect - both sides; decrease in terrorism and occasional spike, yet, mainly focused on domestic causes of extremism and terrorism with little coverage of regional and systemic challenges. Another piece of scholarly work, while underscoring the impact of terrorism, revealed an interesting facet of the economy that can help boost compatible infrastructure through the development of various programs, including enriching tourism to control terrorism.¹³ This article too, did not concentrate on the post-2019 climbing waves of terrorism in Pakistan and the possible impact on the whole ambit of internal security in the country.

The worsening security situation in 2020 and onwards, specifically after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and 2022, resultant cross-border terrorism emanating from sanctuaries on Afghan soil and constraining Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy (in 2020-2022) have

¹¹Madiha Afzal, "Terrorism in Pakistan has Declined, but the Underlying Roots of Extremism Remain," Brookings.edu, Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/15/terrorism-in-pakistan-has-declined-but-the-underlying-roots-of-extremism-remain/> (Accessed on August 05, 2022).

¹²Hassan Abbas, "Extremism and Terrorism Trends in Pakistan: Changing Dynamics and New Challenges," *Combating Terrorism Centre* 14, no.2 (February 2021): 44-51, Available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CTC-SENTINEL-022021.pdf> (Accessed on August 05, 2022).

¹³Muhammad A. Nadeem *et al.* "Impacts of Terrorism, Governance Structure, Military Expenditures and Infrastructures upon Tourism: Empirical Evidence from an Emerging Economy," *Eurasian Bus Rev* 10 (2020): 185–206.

been overlooked in the existing scientific studies. After the review of the current scholarly work, it has been established that the prevailing literature does not give a wider picture of an upsurge in terrorism as a threat to the internal security of Pakistan during the under-review timeframe - 2020-2022. Thus, this research fills the gap in the prevailing academic efforts by focusing on a stated time slot and evaluating various contributory factors in the spike of terrorist incidents in Pakistan.

Theoretical Perspective

Security studies have evolved over the decades, and their explanation has been contingent upon the national interest of the affected country(s) and the operative regional and global environment. In a definition, the concept of security simply refers to the safety and protection of some entity.¹⁴ The security perception became wide with multiple challenges to states, and human security encompasses the security of the individuals to the security of a community of individuals belonging to a particular ethnic or religious belief. Peter Hough defined the basic concept of security, "security refers to the protection of values we hold dear".¹⁵ If security is deficient in the case of personal security or security of communities, then it poses a threat to human security as a part of the state's security or the national security of a state. Late Mahbub ul Haq, the famous Pakistani economist of international repute, was perhaps the founder of the concept of existing human security debate, "for [the] human security approach human beings are the core elements", and not just human being as individuals but complex beings whose individuality arise and linked through relationships

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵Peter Hough et al., *International Security Studies Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2015), PP.3-4.

(communities).¹⁶ The spectrum of human security is much wider, as enunciated in the United Nations Human Security Handbook.¹⁷ Human security is not restricted to community security seeking protection alone from physical vulnerabilities, the host of challenges from traditional and non-traditional security – poverty, hunger, migrations, organized crimes, terrorism and environmental threats are part of the human security spectrum. A multidimensional analytical framework can assist institutions and governments in assessing, developing and implementing an integrated strategy for a broader range of complex issues requiring global responses.

The aforesaid concept revolved around physical security either in terms of law enforcement by state apparatus or social and economic survival of the impacted individuals or communities, as targeting these individuals and communities by the militants would be considered a threat to human security. State sovereignty is the most important element in the security of a state. According to a description of state security, it is centered on preserving the sovereign state from threats.¹⁸ Terrorist groups breach the security barriers and challenge the state's writ as an authority of state or representational shield of the state to protect it from possible threats.¹⁹ In case of challenges to the state's writ

¹⁶ Des Gasper, "Concepts of Human Security," *Routledge Handbook of Human Security*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 28-42, Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/19747795.pdf> (Accessed on August 06, 2022).

¹⁷"An integrated approach for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and the priority areas of the international community and the United Nations system," *Human Security Handbook*, Available at: <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/h2.pdf> (Accessed on August 07, 2022).

¹⁸Christine Chinkin, Arundhati Roy and Richard Falk, "Human Security vs State Security," In *World Tribunal on Iraq: Making the Case Against War*, edited by Müge Gürsoy Sökmen, 1st ed., 430–40, (Between the Lines, 2015), Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1rfzxf9.51> (Accessed on August 05, 2022).

¹⁹Nasir Khan, "Weak governance and writ of the state," *Daily Times*, November 07, 2018, Available at: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/319223/weak-governance-and-writ-of-the-state/> (Accessed on August 05, 2022).

or sovereignty of the state, the sovereignty forces of the state should act through kinetic actions to restore the state's writ.

Given the scope of this paper and its limitations, human security is being evaluated through the prism of terrorism in Pakistan from January 2020 to June 2022. In the above backdrop, the study is aimed at investigating challenges to personal security, security of communities and state sovereignty. The concept of human security is at the center stage of Pakistan's National Security priorities – National Security Policy 2022- 2026.²⁰ TTP realized that the US was about to withdraw from Afghanistan in the second half of 2021. They were emboldened to wrest a share in the power pie of Pakistan and intensified attacks on the state's law enforcing agencies and military installations in the different areas of the county. Terrorism being a non-traditional security threat, transforms into a traditional security threat when terrorist resorts to pitch battles against security forces. Besides the threats to the common individuals or security personnel as personal insecurity, the community's security also became under threat in Pakistan, as the Christian community, Shiite community and Hazara-Shia community were being targeted by the militants in the country.

Application of some international relations theories is necessary to understand the waves of terrorism, its causes and impacts. Alex P. Schmidt, the renowned scholar in terrorism studies, offered several terrorism theories encompassing the role of states in sponsoring and perpetuating terrorism and individual and group level ideological motivations, radicalization, indoctrination and other socio-anthropological factors analyzing the motivations and incentives to

²⁰"Human security- Challenges and Opportunities," *National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026*, (2022), P.44-46, Available at: <https://static.theprint.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NSP.pdf> (Accessed on August 09, 2022).

individual terrorists and their networks.²¹ Such theories (especially radicalization and indoctrination) are useful if applied in conjunction with the theory of foreign policy - Neoclassical Realism. According to the concept of radicalization, it happens as a result of three elements coming together: the individuals' desires, the narrative to which they are subjected, and the groups in which they are implanted.²² Here emotional vulnerability such as anger, alienation, and marginalization might be considered as push risk factors as many individuals are being pushed into radicalization by their insight of the disappointment of all nonviolent options, including political contributions, civil society acts, peaceable objections etc. In many of these cases, the persons join a like-minded violent group, and they believe and accept the beliefs and views held by their group. The concept of indoctrination, it means teaching someone to accept a set of beliefs without questioning these beliefs. According to the indoctrination in violent extremism and terrorism, the individuals' extremist beliefs exaggerate, and they view violence as necessary to support their beliefs. At this stage, individuals tend to connect with violent groups that embrace the same terrorist views.²³

Neoclassical Realism is a theory of international relations regarding the connection of foreign policy with the internal situation of a state. It is an approach of foreign policy analysis focusing on the states' external policies, including security strategy impacted by the state's domestic affairs. The states respond to the limits and prospects of the

²¹Alex P. Schmid, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), PP. 201-225.

²²Arie W. Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. Bélanger & Rohan Gunaratna, "Significance Quest Theory of Radicalization," *The Three Pillars of Radicalization: Needs, Narratives, and Networks* (New York, 2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 May 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190851125.003.0003> (Accessed on October 14, 2022).

²³Allison G. Smith, "How Radicalization to Terrorism Occurs in the United States: What Research Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice Tells Us," OJP.gov, June 2018. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250171.pdf> (Accessed on October 11, 2022).

international arrangements, but domestic factors such as political environment, strategic culture and leader perceptions shape their responses. This study investigates the rise of terrorist waves in Pakistan in 2020-2022 from a neoclassical realist perspective pursuing to understand international political affairs and security policy of the state by considering the internal environment impacted by the radicalization and indoctrination of the militant groups. It argues that Pakistan's tense regional security milieu, terrorism committed by violent groups, and weak responses in law enforcement influence the foreign and security policy of the state.²⁴

In this paper, the attention remains on terrorism and its related threats in the aforementioned timeframe (January 2020 to June 2022), and this theoretical framework is an appropriate conceptual outline for the study.²⁵ The regional players sponsor terrorism with proxies and exploit terrorism as a tool of their external strategies to harm Pakistan's strategic interests in the region. After a two-decade-long war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan as a state is struggling to maintain a delicate balance between overbearing systemic pressures, a hostile regional environment and fragile domestic optics. For instance, apart from a state's position in international affairs as a crucial element in a state's foreign policy, the domestic situation can also affect a state's foreign policy.²⁶

²⁴Arshad Mahmood, "Combating Terrorism in Pakistan: Post 9/11 -A Neoclassical Realist Perspective," (PhD Thesis, NDU Islamabad, 2019).
<http://pr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/handle/123456789/13434> (Accessed on September 10, 2022).

²⁵G. Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 no.1(1998):144–172.

²⁶Ali A. Omar, "Is There Anything 'New' in Neoclassical Realism?," IR.info, February 13, 2013, Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/13/is-there-anything-new-in-neoclassical-realism/> (Accessed on August 09, 2022).

By collecting and analyzing the secondary data in this study, the authors applied the situational approach of a qualitative approach to address the questions of why and how terrorism rose in 2020, 2021 and 2022 and what were its impacts on the internal security of the state? The security perspective of the situational approach offers a design to analyze the situations concerning challenges to the security of the state, and in the case of terrorism, it analyses circumstances that erupted due to terrorism, its causes and impacts.²⁷ It is about the facts encompassing various events and situations causing the intensity of terrorism in Pakistan in the phase covering two and half years (from January 2020 to June 2022). This design is a methodological tool for studying complex situations.²⁸ Then, this systematic instrument is appropriate to analyze the complicated situation linked to terrorism and its threats to Pakistan's various aspects of security. Likewise, for a better understanding of the prevailing conditions concerning terrorism, the comparative method is furthermore important in order to comparatively analyze the circumstances in the pre- and post-2019 eras. Examining similar and dissimilar variables, the comparative method of political studies involves assessing the comparison of the political structures, institutions, policies of the state and behavior of the state and other actors.²⁹

²⁷G.R. Newman, "Situational Approaches to Terrorism," In: G. Bruinsma, D. Weisburd, (eds) *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, (New York: Springer, 2014). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5690-2_95.

²⁸J. Kalenda, "Situational analysis as a framework for interdisciplinary research in the social sciences," *De Gruyter*, 2016, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2016-0029> (Accessed on August 12, 2022).

²⁹Jay Steinmetz, "Comparative Politics," *Politics, Power, and Purpose: An Orientation to Political Science*, (Kansas: Fort Hays State University, 2021), p.174. <https://fhsu.pressbooks.pub/orientationpolisci/chapter/chapter-9-public-law-and-pre-law-training/>.

Rise of Terrorism in 2020-2022

Although the timeframe of this study is from January 2020 to June 2022, but for contextualizing the trend in terrorism, the authors also presented an overview of a decline in terrorist activism from 2015 to 2019 (and its reasons) and a gradual upsurge in subsequent years. Terrorism was at its peak in approximately one and half decades of the 2000s era in Pakistan as a number of significant terrorist incidents occurred in the country until 2014. According to Global Terrorism Index 2015, Pakistan was among the five countries reported for 78 % of deaths in terrorism in 2014.³⁰ A significant rise in terrorist incidents forced the state of Pakistan to launch a comprehensive operation against the terrorists in the year (2014), having more than 5,000 deaths contributed by more than 1,500 terrorist incidents in the country. These incidents included two major terrorist attacks: a high-profile damaging terrorist assault by foreign terrorists on Karachi Airport in June 2014 and the brutal crime of killing 130 innocent children by targeting the Army Public School at Peshawar in December of the same year. The long-awaited comprehensive military operation titled "Zarb e Azb" started immediately after the attack on the Karachi Airport in June 2014, but terrorism was not controlled till December, as the children were brutally murdered in the Peshawar school before the year's end. However, the much-touted National Action Plan (NAP) was crafted after galvanizing national consensus in the All-Parties Conference, giving Pakistan's Military a free hand to broaden its kinetic actions and combing of troubled regions. As a result of the broader military strikes in the different parts of the country, including Waziristan, the main hub of terrorism in the country, there was a considerable halt in the growing

³⁰"Global Terrorism Index 2015," Institute for Economic Peace, (2015), Available at: <https://privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202015%2C%20Institute%20for%20Economics%20%26%20Peace.pdf> (Accessed on August 13, 2022).

terrorism in the country in 2015.³¹ The data collected through web sources shows that with more than 900 incidents, there was an approximately 40% decline in terrorist activities in 2015 compared to the previous year.³² The trend of reduction in terrorism continued during 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 with 526, 294, 164 and 136 terrorist incidents respectively. It was the post-2014 period when Pakistan claimed to win the war against terrorism.³³

According to the data cited in the table below, the year 2020, with 506 deaths in 193 incidents, demonstrates an increase in terrorist activism in the country. This upsurge continued in the year 2021, with 663 deaths in 276 terrorist incidents. As this study also covers 2022 under its timeframe, it is important to mention that about 500 people were killed in the first six months of this year. The years 2021 and 2022 are further crucial as US troops withdrew from Pakistan's neighborhood and the Afghan Taliban, which seized power in Kabul on August 15 (2021), continued their efforts to stabilize their government in the country in 2022. The Taliban's success in Afghanistan led to the establishment of a government supported by Pakistan on the one hand, whereas on the other hand, the Pakistani violent militant groups that once had fled to Afghanistan after military operations in Pakistan tried to resume their violent activities in the country (Pakistan).³⁴ As for

³¹ Madeeha Anwar, "Report: Noticeable Decline in Pakistan's Terror Fatalities in 2016," VOA, November 19, 2017, Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/noticeable-decline-in-pakistan-terror-fatalities/4125523.html> (Accessed on August 16, 2022).

³² "Data Sheet-Pakistan: Yearly Fatalities," SATP, Available at: <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan> (Accessed on August 14, 2022).

³³ "A factsheet on Pakistan CT effort," Embassy of Pakistan Washington, December 16, 2017, <https://embassyofpakistanusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Factsheet-on-Pakistan%E2%80%99s-CT-Effort.pdf> (Accessed on September 01, 2022).

³⁴ Antonio Giustozzi, "The Resurgence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," RUSI, August 12 2021, Available at: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/resurgence-tehrik-i-taliban-pakistan> (Accessed July 22, 2022).

Pakistan's support to the Afghan Taliban, though there are also other matters but the country (Pakistan) had been supporting the group (Afghan Taliban) due to the Indian factor and maintaining specific leverage over future political dispensation in Afghanistan. However, with the defiant Afghan Taliban, extending tacit support to TTP and looking the other way over this group (TTP)'s terrorist acts inside Pakistan proved counterproductive as the presence of TTP's sanctuaries on Afghan soil and AT's sympathy with this group caused complications.

Even the law enforcement agencies of Pakistan had hinted in advance about the waves of terrorism in the country once the Afghan Taliban took over in Afghanistan. This could be attributed to a soft corner by the Afghan Taliban towards TTP stationed and operating from shelters on Afghan soil, which started exploiting the situation. Secondly, anti-Pakistan forces facing daunting challenges in post-US withdrawal time also added to existing complexities. It does mean that Pakistan perceived fewer terrorist activities during the US presence in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks with less or more frequency continued in Pakistan even before the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. At that time, one reason for terrorist waves in Pakistan was the reaction to US operations near Pak-Afghan border and fear of drone strikes against TTP and other militant organizations. Another aspect is that AT's victory in 2021 in Afghanistan might be an encouraging element for TTP, stressing a share in the power pie of Pakistan through stepping up terrorist activities in the country. Furthermore, the chaos in Afghanistan during the US withdrawal was profitably utilized by TTP to inflict a crippling blow on Pakistani law enforcement agencies (LEAs). The Government of Pakistan had been engaging TTP's leadership by offering a window of opportunity for this terrorist entity to renounce violence and become part of mainstream society; however, successive efforts remained unfruitful. AT-TTP ideological linkage was yet another factor inhibiting AT from clamping down on TTP activities on Afghan soil.

In case of the reappearance of militant groups in Pakistan, their sleeping cells throughout the country might be reactivated. The increasing number of casualties in the terrorist attacks in 2020-2022 evidenced the recurrence of the terrorist groups and their associates as civilians, including individuals and religious and ethnic communities, and security forces were the target of the terrorist groups in this period. For example, 169 civilians and 178 security personnel were among 506 deaths in 193 terror incidents reported in 2020. Similarly, 214 were civilians, and 226 were security persons among the 663 deaths in 267 terrorist incidents in 2021, and finally, 143 were civilians and 193 were security personnel, a total of 515 deaths in 175 incidents in the first six months of 2022. There were people associated with the different religious and ethnic communities among the civilian deaths, and similarly, there were military, paramilitary and police personnel among the security forces' deaths during the terrorism in Pakistan in 2020-2022. In light of the data collected, a sizable increase in terrorist activities is confirmed as the period of 2020-2022 witnessed several terrorist attacks, including a number of suicide blasts.³⁵ The attacks were reportedly perpetrated by different religiously inspired militants, violent sectarian groups, violent nationalist groups and separatist insurgents.

³⁵"Pakistan Security Report-2021," *Research Journal Conflict and Peace Studies*14, 1(Jan-Jun 2021), accessed August 09, 2022, <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sr2021FinalWithTitles.pdf>.

Table 1: Terrorist Incidents and Fatalities (January 2014-June 2022)

Year	Incidents of Killing	Civilians	Security Forces	Terrorists/Insurgents /Extremists	Not Specified	Total
2014	1569	1471	508	3268	263	5510
2015	950	866	339	2407	73	3685
2016	526	541	291	897	68	1797
2017	294	439	216	533	81	1269
2018	164	363	158	162	10	693
2019	136	142	137	86	0	365
2020	193	169	178	159	0	506
2021	267	214	226	223	0	663
2022 (January -June)	175	143	193	179	0	515
Total**	15854	20956	7748	33656	3208	65568

Source: <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan>.³⁶

Recurrence of Terrorist Groups in 2020-2022

The recurrence of some of the religiously inspired violent, separatist and ethnic terrorist groups in Pakistan has been identified as one of the main reasons for the rise of terrorism in 2020. Such activities continued in 2021 and 2022 in the country as well. A report for the year 2020 prepared by a Pakistani research institute discovered that main terrorist groups reorganized their violent activities in different parts of the country in 2020.³⁷ For example, TTP and its associates resumed regrouping in tribal areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan during the

³⁶“Data Sheet-Pakistan: Yearly Fatalities,” SATP.

³⁷“Pakistan Security Report-2020,” *Research Journal Conflict and Peace Studies*13, 1(Jan-June 2021), Available at: <https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Final-Report-2020.pdf> (Accessed on August 09, 2022).

year. This group claiming about 46 per cent of the total 67 terrorist attacks in the country in 2020, still remained among the major actors of volatility in Pakistan in 2021 and 2022. Another religiously inspired terrorist group, IS-K, committed various violent activities, including two major attacks in 2020 in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK) provinces and its brutal actions were repeated in 2021 and 2022. One of the two major attacks reportedly perpetrated by IS-K was a powerful bomb blast in a mosque during evening prayers in Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan, in January 2020, killing at least 15 worshipers and injuring around 20 others.³⁸ In another cruel incident, at least ten students of a religious seminary in Peshawar, the capital city of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, were killed, and above 100 others were injured in October 2020.³⁹ This religious school of the Deobandi Islamic law was described as pro-Afghan Taliban's theological seminary, and according to the media reports, there is solid proof of the involvement of IS-K in this bomb explosion.⁴⁰ Targeting particular ethnic-religious communities was one of the horrible objectives of IS-K as terrorists of this group also assassinated eleven coal mine workers of the Shia Hazara community by cutting their gullets and wounding four others in a fatal attack in Kachi district of Balochistan in January 2021.⁴¹ On March 04, 2022, IS-K

³⁸Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan Mosque Bombing Kills 15," VOA, January 10, 2020, Available at: https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_pakistan-mosque-bombing-kills-15/6182409.html (Accessed on July 30, 2022).

³⁹Abdul Sayed, "Islamic State Khorasan Province's Peshawar Seminary Attack and War Against Afghan Taliban Hanafis," *Terrorism Monitor* 18 no.21, (2020): 7-10, Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/islamic-state-khorasan-provinces-peshawar-seminary-attack-and-war-against-afghan-taliban-hanafis/> (Accessed on August 09, 2022).

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹"Pakistan coal miners kidnapped and killed in IS attack," BBC, January 03, 2021, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55522830> (Accessed on August 14, 2022).

claimed to kill at least 61 worshippers and injured 196 others in a suicide assault on a Shi'ite Mosque at a locality in Peshawar.⁴²

From January 2020 to June 2022, the Baloch insurgent groups also exacerbated their attacks on security forces and state installations in the different areas of the province of Balochistan. The insurgent groups which remained active in this period in the province were Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), Baloch Republican Guard (BRG), Balochistan Liberation Tigers (BLT), Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and United Baloch Army (UBA).⁴³ BLA and BLF were the two main factions which committed 24 assaults out of the total 34 executed by the Baloch rebels in the country in 2020, and such happenings continued in 2021 and 2022. For instance, at least 10 persons were killed and 35 injured in a suicide blast hitting a Police vehicle near the Quetta on February 17, 2020.⁴⁴ In another attack, at least 16 Army personnel were killed by Balochistan Liberation Tigers (BLT) at an army check post in the Dera Bugti District of Balochistan on February 19, 2020.⁴⁵ These types of attacks on the security personnel in Balochistan were reported throughout the year and onwards.⁴⁶ On

⁴²Sophia Saifi and Saleem Mehsud, "ISIS claim responsibility for blast killing dozens at Shia Mosque in Pakistan's Peshawar," *CNN*, March 05, 2022, Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/04/asia/pakistan-peshawar-blast-intl/index.html> (Accessed on August 18, 2022).

⁴³"Overview of Security in 2021: Critical Challenges and Recommendations," *Pakistan Security Report 2021*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 2021, Available at: https://www.pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Overview_PIPS-SR_2021.pdf (Accessed on August 21, 2022).

⁴⁴"Suicide bombing in Quetta leaves 10 dead, 35 injured," *Daily Times*, February 18, 2020, Available at: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/560323/suicide-bombing-in-quetta-leaves-10-dead-35-injured/> (Accessed on August 15, 2022).

⁴⁵Zeus H. Mendez, "Repression and Revolt in Balochistan," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, FALL (2020): 43-61, Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Aug/31/2002488092/-1/1/1/MENDEZ.PDF> (Accessed on August 16, 2022).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

February 17, 2021, at least five personnel of the state's paramilitary forces, including a junior officer, were killed while six others were injured when BLA's rebels assaulted two security check posts in two different places of the Kahan area (Kohlu District) of Balochistan.⁴⁷ On January 26, 2022, ten soldiers of military forces were killed in a terrorist attack on a security check post in the Kech area of the province.⁴⁸ BLA also claimed to have killed three Chinese academics and their Pakistani driver in a suicide bombing near the University of Karachi's Confucius Institute on April 26 2022.⁴⁹

The Pakistani security forces based in the tribal region, especially Waziristan, also remained targets of terrorists in 2020-2022. For instance, on August 11, 2020, a brigadier and three Pakistan army soldiers were injured in a suicide assault in the Laddha neighborhood of South Waziristan, bordering Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Such attacks on the military forces continued in the tribal area of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan in 2021 as four soldiers and four terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire that erupted after the terrorist attack on a security check post in Makeen locality of South Waziristan on February 11, 2021.⁵¹ Although terrorists involved in many of the cases are not identified but TTP is

⁴⁷"Balochistan Major Incidents 2021," SATP, Available at:

https://www.satp.org/other-data/pakistan-balochistan/major-incidents_2021 (Accessed on August 29, 2022).

⁴⁸"Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2022," SATP, Available at:

<https://www.satp.org/terrorist-activity/pakistan> (Accessed on August 19, 2022).

⁴⁹Raghav Bikhchandani, "Karachi University bombing latest attack by 'restructured', more aggressive Baloch insurgency," April 28, 2022, *The Print*, Available at:

<https://theprint.in/world/behind-karachi-university-bombing-a-restructured-more-aggressive-baloch-insurgency/933600/> (Accessed on August 20, 2022).

⁵⁰"Pakistan Attacks on Military Personnel:2020," SATP, Available at:

www.satp.org/other-data/pakistan/Military_2020 (Accessed on August 19, 2022).

⁵¹"Pakistan: Timeline (Terrorist Activities) -2021," SAPT, Available at:

<https://www.satp.org/terrorist-activity/pakistan-Feb-2021> (Accessed on August 20, 2022).

reportedly accused of most of the terrorist attacks in tribal areas, including Waziristan.⁵²

Sindh province of Pakistan also faced the challenge of emerging terrorism in 2020-2022. In 2020, Sindhi nationalist factions carried out ten violent attacks in different parts of Sindh province, and eight of them were committed by a group called “Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA)”.⁵³ For instance, SRA claimed responsibility for a hand grenade attack on a Punjabi settler’s stockroom in a Bazar in the Ghotki area on August 08, 2020, in which four people were wounded. The organization again claimed twin grenade assaults on the Pakistani security forces’ offices in Shikarpur and Jacobabad cities on August 10, 2022.⁵⁴

Perils to Internal Security of Pakistan in 2020-2022

The state's internal security is about an act of keeping peace and maintaining law and order within the limits of an independent state by maintaining the nationwide law and protecting against interior security dangers. Perils to the safety of the state increase in the absence of measures by the state to safeguard its national interests. In the case of a new spate of terrorism in the post-2019 (2020-2022) era in Pakistan, these trends resulted in heightened threats to the country's internal security. Less security or mismanagement in the security measures could also be the causes of terrorism, along with serious consequences in a sovereign state. On the causes and consequences of terrorism, a piece of scholarly work outlined that weak or failed states offer various types of vulnerabilities, including terrorist activities making such states a “breeding ground” or “sanctuary” for terrorism. Describing the case of Pakistan, the article assumed that if Pakistan fails, it will be a safe haven

⁵² Afzal, “Terrorism in Pakistan has declined.”

⁵³ “Pakistan: Time Line,” SATP.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

for the militants.⁵⁵ Thus, threats to three major aspects of the state's security have been analyzed in this paper. The risk to human security is classified as a danger to the rights of people as individuals or communities as groups of the people in a state, or it can be called "insecurity" of the citizens or groups of the citizens of the state.⁵⁶ An attack on the security forces or state's installations is described as a threat to the capability of a state to avert a military invasion and protect the state's values, institutions and borders.⁵⁷

Although terrorism has been identified as a crucial threat to the overall security of Pakistan, but the new waves of terrorism posed an expressive threat to three important elements of security such as personal security (of the masses), community security (of different religious and religious-ethnic groups) and state security (perceived in terms of state sovereignty). Analysis of the terrorism-related situation in Pakistan in the period of 2020-2022 validated that since common people, minority communities and security forces, including military and police, were targeted in the new waves of terrorism, the threats to various aspects of internal security once again magnified in the country.

As for personal security, target killings of people during terrorist activities created a threat to this type of human security. Many individuals were killed during the various terrorist attacks from January 2020 to June 2022. Several examples of the killing of the masses in different areas are presented in the study, and these types of attacks

⁵⁵Matiul Hoque Masud, Helal Uddin Ahmmed, Anwar Hossain Choudhury, and Muhammad Ridwan Mostafa, "Pakistan: On the Way to be Failed State?" *Mediterranean Journal of Social sciences* 4, no. 1 (2013): 63-63.

⁵⁶Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, "Human Security: Undermining Human Rights?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2012): 88-112.

⁵⁷David A. Baldwin, "The concept of security," *Review of International Studies* 23 (1997): 5-26, Available at:

[http://www.princeton.edu/~dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20\(1997\)%20The%20Concept%20of%20Security.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20(1997)%20The%20Concept%20of%20Security.pdf). (Accessed on July 30, 2022).

terribly impact on the personal aspect of human security. The death of 15 people and injuring 20 others in a bomb explosion claimed by a terrorist group in a mosque in Quetta city in February 2020 can be presented as a case of the threat to the personal aspect of human security.⁵⁸ During escalating waves of terrorism, some of the religious-ethnic communities were assaulted by the terrorists. This threat could be considered a danger to community security as another subsection of human security. For example, the terrorists targeted the Shia-Hazara community, an ethnoreligious group in Quetta and other areas of Balochistan, in 2020-2022. Additionally, a mosque of the Shia community was attacked by the terrorists in Peshawar, and a terrorist group targeted even some groups of the Punjabi community in Sindh.

From 2020 to 2022, by cracking the security barriers of the state, the terrorists committed assaults on the security forces in various parts of the country. Attacks on security personnel and state installations took place in different areas of Pakistan, including Waziristan and Balochistan, and this type of threat is identified as a threat to the security and sovereignty of the state. TTP was very active in the tribal areas of Pakistan including Waziristan given the number of attacks on the security forces.⁵⁹ Most of the attacks on the security forces in Balochistan were executed by the Baloch separatist groups. Attacks on Chinese based in Pakistan, including killing three Chinese academicians at the university in Karachi, were also committed by the Baloch groups posing threats to the country's national interests. Prevailing political uncertainty and blame game is being exploited by the terrorist groups, and dangers to the internal security of Pakistan may be intensified for a

⁵⁸Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan Mosque Bombing Kills 15," *VOA*, January 10, 2020, Available at: https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_pakistan-mosque-bombing-kills-15/6182409.html (Accessed on July 30, 2022).

⁵⁹Afzal, "Terrorism in Pakistan has declined".

consecutive period if concrete actions are not initiated by provincial and federal governments.

Table 2 – Terrorist threats for different aspects of internal security

S.No	Aspects of the security	Identified threats
1.	Human security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Threats to personal security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaths of Individuals in terrorist incidents ➤ Threats to community security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaths of people associated with various religious and ethnic communities in the terrorism
2.	State security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Threats to the state's security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attacks of terrorists on security forces • Attacks of terrorists on state installations

The capacity of Provincial Law Enforcing Agencies (LEAs), especially police in affected provinces – Sindh, KPK and Balochistan is weak due to inherent structural deficiencies and political interference in their recruitment and career progression policies. Though the terrorism atmosphere in Sindh is different, wherein police, along with Rangers, should be able to control the terrorist incidents yet, reported corruption and massive political interference are inhibiting factors towards effective control of terrorist incidents in the province. The case of

Balochistan and KPK is different, where the hardened terrorists who are allegedly sponsored by foreign intelligence agencies caused significant damage to the life and property of the civilian population and security forces operating in these provinces. These terrorists carry sophisticated weapons and dare raiding of security forces' operational posts, their convoys and administrative camps. Under such circumstances, police and paramilitary forces are neither sufficiently trained nor equipped to fight these terrorists. The military's involvement in flushing these militants from affected regions becomes inevitable. Moreover, an appropriate number of paramilitary forces have been added to the regional security apparatus of Balochistan and KPK provinces to augment the local police after the 2014-2015 military operations.

Political instability, which is connected with the concept of political change and civil-military relations, also should not be overlooked, as a most recent example is the differences between political and military leadership and regime change in the country in early 2022. The political instability, impacted the state's policies, especially the strategy towards fighting terrorism. The coalition government and military are entangled in a complex web of political accusations, corruption narrative, inefficiency and desired attention towards this vital aspect of internal security could not be neglected.

The State of Pakistan had constantly been fighting terrorists, and the pause was inevitable due to operational and political considerations. During the period under review, intelligence agencies and the relevant government departments had been engaged with TTP and Baloch sub-nationalists to negotiate peace; however, the progress remained insignificant. Ironically militant organizations used this dialogue as a ploy to reorganize and refit to deliver fatal blows to LEAs. Baloch militant organizations having a different approach, are less interested in engaging in dialogue with the government. Failed agreements with TTP in the past, especially in 2006 and 2007 and later, also proved futile

efforts, and the terrorist bounced back with greater ferocity. Given the history of frequent killings of religious minorities, the state failed to ensure the protection of its citizens possibly due to multiple challenges it faced and erosion in its capacity to preserve its sovereignty and obligations towards the population irrespective of cast, creed and color.

Conclusion

It has been verified that waves of terrorism increased from January 2020 to June 2022 as compared to the previous years. Three types of threats to the state's internal security have been established due to rising terrorism in this period. Attacks on common people by terrorists consider threats to personal security. Targeting minority communities in this period has been identified as a threat to the community aspect of human security. As the security forces, including military and police, were targeted in the new waves of terrorism in the period of 2020-2022, the threats to the state sovereignty and internal security stand have been substantiated during the period under evaluation.

The spate of terrorism spiraling during the period under review manifested multiple challenges for Pakistan- systemic, regional security backlash and, perhaps, more importantly, the domestic front of the country. While selective kinetic actions, where needed the most, may be carried out, however, a cohesive national response encompassing law enforcement, reconciliation and socio-economic developments are cardinal points to tackle with the menace of terrorism. Some of the specific steps encompassing the domestic level and systemic magnitude are specifically mentioned below for the policymakers and researchers who wish to explore the subject further. The conflict in Pakistan (terrorism) cannot be divorced from the Afghan conflict; therefore, its systemic dimensions must never be lost sight of, and all the stakeholders should be consulted for their positive role in reigning in the declining monster of fear. Any possibility of a terror monster ever rearing its head in the region must be crushed with collective efforts. Given the

conflicting interests of the parties, the task looks herculean yet vital to be accomplished.

Pakistan should initiate new projects where required and consolidate on a host of domestic anti-terrorism and counterterrorism initiatives as part of the National Action Plan to negotiate peace with reconcilable elements, rehabilitate ones who renounce violence and use selective force against those challenging writ of the state. Internal political cohesion, ideological harmony and balanced socio-economic uplift strategies are vital to achieving the desired objectives. Pakistan's law-enforcing agencies fought valiantly by sacrificing thousands of lives for the security of fellow countrymen. However, focused capacity enhancement should be undertaken on priority. So that military is freed to concentrate on international borders and prepare for its primary task, defending the country against external aggression. Stronger law enforcement agencies would also deter terrorist elements in respective provinces besides helping restore peace, which is considered vital for the socio-economic development of the downtrodden.

National Security and its Linkage with Social Media: Lessons for Pakistan

Saad Al Abd¹

Abstract

This paper explores the literature on conceptual aspects of national security, its relationship with social media, and the impacts of the latter on the national security of Pakistan. This paper answers a few questions, i.e., what is national security, how does social media overlap with it, and what are the implications of social media for the national security of Pakistan? The methodology applied in this research is qualitative and relies on secondary sources; therefore, literature has been explored to find the answers. The analysis of this research is inspired by the thematic analysis technique through which it has been ascertained that national security is a subjective phenomenon and is mainly defined by national values. The relationship between national security and social media is significant, as the latter extensively relies upon as an avenue by anarchists, extremists, terrorists, and external forces to spread disinformation and achieve their respective objectives. As far as Pakistan is concerned, the interrelationship between national security and social media has not been looked into in detail. Accordingly, this research concludes that there are gaps in the literature produced in Pakistan on social

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media vis-à-vis its connection with national security. Consequently, the existing literature lacks an explanation of the political, strategic, and social motives of the actors employing social media for their respective vested purposes, especially for propaganda.

Keywords: National security, Social Media, Political Instability, Extremism and Terrorism, Hybrid War, Fake News

Introduction

This research describes the concept of national security and its relationship with social media within the scholarly research on the phenomenon globally and in Pakistan. During the last ten years, social media has expanded in reach in Pakistan, both in its urban and rural areas. Accordingly, people from almost all segments of society are now extensively seen resorting to different Social Media Networks (SMNs) for connectivity, information gathering, and entertainment purposes. However, at the same time, social media is also being effectively used by both state and anti-state elements to protect their interests, which sometimes challenge national values of Pakistan. Therefore, this research focuses on answering a few questions, including what is the relationship between social media and national security and how does social media challenge the national security of Pakistan?

National security is not limited to securing a state's territorial integrity and sovereignty alone. It is equally connected with the protection of the values of a state.² Over the last eight decades, realists, idealists, and constructivists have used various theoretical arguments to define national security. Based on a holistic review of these arguments,

² David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 5-26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20097464>.

this research paper ascertains that national security is a subjective and dynamic phenomenon as national interests keep on changing. Similarly, the national security of Pakistan is not only limited to protecting its borders but is equally applicable towards securing its values, which include the ideology of Pakistan, national cohesion, religious tolerance, cultural diversity, and political stability.

This paper is significant because it evaluates the conceptual milieu of national security and interprets social media as a national security challenge. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that national security is mostly analyzed, in International Relations theory, as an objective fact that does not take into account the bias of policymakers. Thereby, when security challenges from social media are pointed out - these are termed unquantifiable and thus do not find a way into policymaking. This paper, on the other hand, links social media threats as harmful to Pakistan's national values. The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, the concept of national security has been explained. In the second section, the relationship between social media and national security has been covered. In the third and last section of this paper, available literature concerning social media as a threat to Pakistan's national security has been evaluated.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research is based on qualitative research techniques, as it aids in evaluating the inter-subjectivities of the phenomenon. The data has been collected from the available literature, i.e., books and journal articles available online. Therefore, the inductive approach has been utilized, where relevant data has initially been explored based on the research questions and objectives set in advance. Subsequently, it has been correlated with building a narrative.³

³ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: Sage, 2015).

For the evaluation of this research, the thematic analysis technique has been employed to describe various perspectives on social media vis-à-vis their linkage with national security using metaphors from existing literature.⁴ Consequently, the collected data has extracted themes pertaining to national security, the interrelationship between social media and national security, and social media as a threat to Pakistan's national security.

What is National Security? A Description of Western and Pakistani Perspective

This section explains the concept of national security from the perspective of Realists, Idealists, and Constructivists. In addition, it also dwells on various scholarly debates related to national security in Pakistan. Initially, realists' core assumptions regarding national security are outlined, and then idealists' opinions are considered, which are subsequently followed by constructivists and human security advocates. Lastly, discussions on the concept of national security in Pakistan have succinctly been presented.

During the Cold War period, there was a lot of debate in the literature regarding the concept of national security. Within the theoretical paradigm of Realism, Neorealist scholars like Walter Lipman, Bernard Brodie, Fredrick H. Hartmann, George Frost Kennan, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Kenneth Waltz have approached the concept of national security from the lens of national interest(s). These Neorealists have argued that national security can only be achieved by acquiring power and balancing the threats in an anarchic environment. Therefore, the aim of a state must be to ensure the security of its borders while

⁴ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (London: Oxford, 2012); Lorelli S. Nowell, Jill M. Norris, Deborah E. White, and Nancy J. Moules. "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, (December 2017). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>.

countering traditional threats.⁵ However, classical Realist Arnold Wolfers offered a critique of them, who appended that national security is a subjective phenomenon and that an attack can only be interpreted rather than predicted. Furthermore, according to Wolfers, values are more important than survival for any state.⁶ Here he means that states often go the extra mile to protect their values - even if they have to fight states which are militarily more powerful. For instance, the Taliban fought the US-led Western military alliance in Afghanistan while reckoning the governance system introduced by the former as imposed.

Meanwhile, idealists have defined national security from the perspective of cooperation amongst the states, thus emphasizing achieving collective security through international institutions.⁷ John. H. Herz, and Robert Jervis are the prominent idealists who have explained national security in this context.⁸ Their ideas are mainly based on equality, freedom, and self-determination. Nevertheless, they have also stressed the states provide an enabling environment for achieving individual freedoms.⁹

On the other hand, constructivists have argued that ideas produce socially created facts. Therefore, when people interact with each other, they give meaning and context to the language used in communication.

⁵ Bernard Brodie, *National Security Policy and Economic Stability* (New Haven: Yale Institute of International Studies, 1950), 5; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 126; Walter Lipman, *U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 51.

⁶ Arnold Wolfers, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1952): 483-488, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2145138>.

⁷ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, "Liberalism and Security: The contradictions of the liberal Leviathan," *Copenhagen Peace Research Institute* (April 1998), <https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/bub02/>.

⁸ John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 160, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009187>.

⁹ John M. Owen IV, "Liberalism and Security," *International Studies* (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.33>.

The same is the case with state-to-state communication as well.¹⁰ The Constructivist school's significant contributors to the debate on national security are Barry Buzan and David. A. Baldwin. Anton Grizold, and Peter J. Katzenstein.

Buzan has criticized both realists and idealists for not being able to develop a framework to understand security. According to him, though realists and idealists have reorganized arguments over war (Realists) and peace (Idealists), however, national security is a holistic phenomenon.¹¹ Significantly, another constructivist, Anton Grizold, has proposed the inclusion of social security in the concept of national security, integrity, and sovereignty.¹² Peter J. Katzenstein has termed national security as a social construction dependent on cultural factors,¹³ whereas, David A. Baldwin has taken it even further while highlighting the dichotomy between objective and subjective national security values. He has claimed “political independence and national integrity” to be the only objective values of national security, whereas ideologies and culture are subjective - and it is these that generate core values.¹⁴

More recently, Jonathan Kirshner has argued that globalization has altered the traditional theoretical assumptions of national security. Therefore, capitalistic corporations have emerged as key players in the phenomenon of national security, with some of these companies having more financial value than the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of even

¹⁰ Yu-Tai Tsai, "The Emergence of Human Security: A Constructivist View," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 14, no. 2 (2009): 19–33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41852991>.

¹¹ Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Limited, 1983), 2.

¹² Anton Grizold, "The Concept of National Security in the Contemporary World," *International Journal on World Peace* 11, no. 3 (1994): 41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20751984>.

¹³ Peter J Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies*.

developing states. Accordingly, these companies can even influence the states' policy decisions.¹⁵ Similarly, Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow have stated that national security has become more complex with asymmetrical warfare and the phenomenon of terrorism. Consequently, they have stressed on cooperation amongst all stakeholders.¹⁶

Nonetheless, all the above concepts about national security accept the state as the prime actor in protecting national values, whether objective or subjective, from known or perceived threats. However, the new approach to human rights in security argues for limiting the state's role. Instead, it stresses that there should be universal security which duly factors in economic security, political security, health security, and food security.¹⁷

As far as the debates on national security in Pakistan are concerned, the values of the state take center stage. Hafeez Malik, in this regard, has produced significant work while explaining that the ideology of Pakistan acts as a core value for the state. Therefore, Pakistan's conflict with India revolves around this value.¹⁸ Similarly, Iftikhar H. Malik has also dwelt on traditional aspects of Pakistan's security, focusing on border relations with India, Afghanistan and Iran.¹⁹

¹⁵ Jonathan Kirshner, "Globalization and National Security," in *Globalization and National Security*, ed. Jonathan Kirshner (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), 1-35.

¹⁶ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Twenty-First-Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Problems and Processes* (Maxwell Airforce Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 2006), 14-15.

¹⁷ Lily Hamourtziadou, "Security Challenges of the 21st Century: New Challenges and Perspectives," *Journal of Global Faultlines* 6, no. 2 (2020): 121, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/jglobfaul.6.2.0121>.

¹⁸ Hafeez Malik, "Dilemma of National Security," in *Dilemmas of National Security and Cooperation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: Macmillan Press, 1993)

¹⁹ Iftikhar H. Malik, "Pakistan's National Security and Regional Issues: Politics of Mutualities with the Muslim World," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 12 (1994): 1077-1092, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645277>.

Meanwhile, Nasir Hafeez has argued that Pakistan's security policy is inspired by the US since the start of the Cold War.²⁰

Like Hafeez Malik, Masood Khan has also termed the ideology of Pakistan as the core value, which is followed by its diverse culture. However, Khan has termed religious extremism and terrorism as major threats to these values. Accordingly, he argues for a democratic system where human rights and the rule of law are stressed to promote social security.²¹ So, Khan has clearly distinguished between objective and subjective aspects of national security on the lines of Baldwin, as already described above.

Khurshid Khan and Fouzia Amin have linked Pakistan's national security with its values. However, following Neorealism's offensive school, they have criticized the defensive approach of Pakistani leadership on a host of issues, ranging from extremism through terrorism to countering diplomatic onslaught by foreign powers.²²

On the other hand, Saira Yamin feels that Pakistan has faced continuous episodes of insecurity and instability because its civil-military leadership has been experimenting with various governance structures. As a result, Pakistan could not build the capacity of its institutions.²³ For Hussain Nadim, this lack of institutional capacity resulted from the absence of a Pakistan-specific strategic culture that could not be developed as Pakistan's military and civil sectors could not cooperate

²⁰ Nasir Hafeez, "Evolution of Security Structures in Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (2012): 151-171, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48529365>.

²¹ Masood Khan, "Pakistan: Security Challenges and Opportunities," *Pakistan Horizon* 68, no. 3/4 (2015): 9-16, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44988235>.

²² Khurshid Khan and Fouzia Amin, "Understanding the Dynamics of National Security Culture of Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 36, no. 4 (2016): 17-37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48535972>.

²³ Saira Yamin, "Pakistan: National Security Dilemmas and Transition to Democracy," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2015): 1-26.

with each other.²⁴ Arshad Ali has commented that Pakistan did not achieve consensus on security issues amidst Pakistan's Army control over the foreign and defence policies - thereby leaving little room for the aspects of human security.²⁵

A review of the conceptual milieu of national security makes it clear that national values are to be protected at every cost to achieve security. Though these values may vary in the case of different states, however, in the contemporary interconnected world, institutional values such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech are common. They need to be protected both at the individual as well as collective levels. Nevertheless, in the case of Pakistan, the core values, as reviewed in the preceding paragraphs, are the ideology of Pakistan, national cohesion, respect for cultural diversity, and patriotism. The next section of this paper explains how these national values get impacted by social media.

Social Media and its Relationship with National Security

In this section, initially, it has been briefly explained how specific Social Media Networks (SMNs) are shaping the public discourse around the world. Subsequently, the interrelationship between social media and national security has been dilated upon by delineating its key implications for national security while succinctly citing a few examples from different parts of the world. Lastly, states' responses to counter the security threats emanating from social media have been analyzed.

²⁴ Hussain Nadim, "Ties that don't bind: challenges in the cooperation between academia and national security establishment in Pakistan," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence, and Counter Terrorism* 16, no.1 (2021): 44-57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2021.1889648>.

²⁵ Arshad Ali, *Pakistan's National Security Approach and Post-Cold War Security: Uneasy Coexistence* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

Social Media

Hundreds of SMNs have appeared over the last two decades, through which people share their experiences. These networks are mainly related to micro-blogging, video sharing and connecting with friends and families, with Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook being the most popular in their respective categories.²⁶ Nevertheless, over the last few years, the SMNs have briskly evolved to shape public narratives over politics and security issues as well. The success of these SMNs, also referred to as Web 2.0, means that their content is user generated and is mainly measured by the number of active users, i.e., how many users they have been able to draw in and actively engage.²⁷

SMNs like Twitter generally have constructive characteristics like e-governance (where government officials directly engage with the public at large), facilitating statesmen to engage with common masses to gain insight into their issues and problems, and enabling general masses to share their thoughts on a host of political matters and issues of national security. Nonetheless, there are a few negative aspects of these platforms as well, the most significant ones being misinformation, source-based news, and sensationalism which contribute towards the spreading of anarchy in society.²⁸

Thereby, social media has become a cause of concern for the state as it finds it difficult to control the defiance of law and authority. Importantly, social media has also diminished states' control over the information, with people turning more to different SMNs for counter-

²⁶ Donah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Networking Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (2008): 210-230, doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393x.

²⁷ Yaron Ariel and Ruth Avidar, "Information, Interactivity, and Social Media," *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, no. 23 (2015), 19-28, DOI: 10.1080/15456870.2015.972404.

²⁸ Ingrid Hsieh-Yee, "Can We Trust Social Media?" *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* (2021): 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10875301.2021.1947433>.

checking government-issued information. In addition, censorship, which has been a tool of the state in the case of traditional media, has become difficult in the case of social media, especially in the context of human rights. And lastly, more and more people are adapting to digital solutions in their lifestyles and employments. So, it has become an economic compulsion and necessity, further reducing states' options for a blanket ban.²⁹

Relationship between Social Media Networks and National Security

As far as social media's linkage with national security is concerned, the former provides a sustainable platform to anti-state elements, both state and non-state, with the latter comprising both internal and external actors. While state actors generally exploit SMNs to carry out espionage, they are used for propaganda by terrorists and insurgents and for framing purposes by political forces. Scholars have suggested that social media is now acting as the main tool of hybrid warfare, in which narratives play a crucial role. Thereby, it even has the potential to change governments by spreading disinformation, as it happened after the Arab Spring.³⁰ Beata Biały has persuasively argued in this regard that,

Social media has become an excellent channel to mobilize support, disseminate narratives, wage information operations, or even coordinate military operations in the real world. States and non-state actors have started extensively using social media to influence their target audiences' perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors.³¹

²⁹ Jason Abbot, "Social Media," in *Electronic Democracy*, ed. Norbert Kersting (Toronto: Barbara Budrick Publishers, 2012), 77-102.

³⁰ Michael Erbschloe, *Social Media Warfare: Equal Weapons for All* (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2017)

³¹ Beata Biały, "Social Media—From Social Exchange to Battlefield," *The Cyber Defense Review* 2, no. 2 (2017): 75, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26267344>.

With the arrival of social media, the realists' claims of national security as an objective phenomenon and limited to territorial integrity and independence only, as already explained in the first section, are now getting extensively challenged. Therefore, states are forced to spend handsome amounts in securing digital spaces, especially social media platforms, to counter campaigns against the social, political, and religious divide, which can meaningfully impact core values.³²

While social media has the potential to affect national security in many ways adversely, however, stirring lawlessness and creating political divisions are its major implications. This division, as a result of propaganda on social media, can have severe adverse effects on the national psyche and public morale. Consequently, the anarchists, extremists, and terrorists may take advantage of the political instability and further their vested agendas. These inimical forces may also resort to the spread of fake news to achieve their inimical political and strategic goals. While this disinformation is harmful to national cohesion, these disinformation campaigns by external actors can also potentially change the very idea of national values being followed by a nation.³³

Deep fakes on social media are a noticeable cause of concern for national security. Additionally, they can also harm a state's foreign relations. Even more significantly, deep fakes can also be used for framing military leadership to achieve strategic aims by the adversary. It is important to notice that as it is difficult for a non-technical person to

³² Devidas Vijay Bhosale and Chandrakant Bansidhar Bhangе, "Understanding Social Media Tools, Impact Over National Security – A Literature Review," *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 9, no. 6 (2021): 33-38.

³³ Erbschloe, *Social Media Warfare*; Bialy, "Social Exchange to Battlefield;" Bhosale and Bhangе, "Understanding Social Media Tools."

recognize deep fakes, they can very easily cast a divide between the people and security institutions of the state.³⁴

Another implication of social media is its potential to influence the religious thought of the population, with many pseudo-religious scholars regularly sharing abstract information on various social media platforms, especially Facebook and YouTube, which is all to the benefit of extremists and terrorists. They are using different SMNs to expand their narrative quickly. Therefore, another implication of unregulated and unharnessed social media is increased intolerance and extremism in society, with users getting abusive to others' opinions.³⁵

In the following discussion, some examples of real-world implications posed by social media have been cited from the literature while enunciating their adverse effects on national security. For instance, former US President Barrack Obama's Twitter account was hacked in 2013 by Syrian hackers. On this, the Syrians were jubilant that a powerful state like the US could not even secure its President's social media account.³⁶ Similarly, in 2016, riots were witnessed in Zimbabwe, where Twitter and Facebook played a critical role in mustering people. #Tajamuka (we rebel), a hashtag on Twitter, became the key trend contributing towards millions of tweets.³⁷ Likewise, in 2018, Zimbabwe

³⁴ Bobby Chesney and Danielle Citron, "Deep Fakes: A Looming Challenge for Privacy, Democracy, and National Security," *California Law Review* 1753, no. 692 (2018): 1-68, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3213954>.

³⁵ Ishmael Mugari and Rudo Chisuvi, "Social media and national security in Zimbabwe: Embracing social media for national security and addressing social media threats," *African Security Review* 30, no. 1 (2021): 91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1857806>.

³⁶ Eze Charles Chukwuma, "Social Media and National Security: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews* 8, no. 1 (2018): 251.

³⁷ Ishmael Mugari and Rudo Chisuvi, "Social media and national security in Zimbabwe: Embracing social media for national security and addressing social media threats," *African Security Review* 30, no. 1 (2021): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1857806>.

once again witnessed protests, this time against its Election Commission, owing to a disinformation campaign regarding purposeful rigging in the elections, which was once again smeared on Twitter.³⁸

Boko Haram, a Nigerian-based terrorist outfit, has also been consistently and effectively using social media aimed at inspiring youth to join their fold. In addition, Boko Haram uses social media for connectivity with other terrorist groups as well. Accordingly, in the absence of specific laws related to the governance of social media, its banning has consistently invited criticism from human rights organizations, thus severing the dilemma faced by the state.³⁹

In the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, social media has been employed as a tool of propaganda warfare by Russians, Ukrainians and the West alike, thus making the world witness the first-ever social media war. As far as the Russians are concerned, they have been more successful in maneuvering their disinformation campaign. Interestingly, Russian officials also used Twitter for their disinformation campaign.⁴⁰ They capitalized on Twitter to first produce and accentuate the fog of war, which was aimed at building an anti-Ukraine narrative within the country and Putin succeeded in all this.⁴¹ Yet, another design of Russian social media warfare in Ukraine has been to employ dedicated social media propagandist teams that have successfully and astutely been

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ Joshua Chukwuere and Chijioke Francis Onyebukwa, "The Impacts of Social Media on National Security: A View from the Northern and South-Eastern Region of Nigeria," *International Review of Management and Marketing* 8, no. 5 (2018): 50-59.

⁴⁰ Dan Ciuriak, "The Role of Social Media in Russia's War on Ukraine," *Ciuriak Consulting* (April 8, 2022): 2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4078863>.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

framing incidents against the Ukrainian military by capitalizing on fake news and patriotic frames.⁴²

On the other hand, Ukrainians have also not remained limited to the official narrative. Most Ukrainian Twitter and Facebook users have successfully portrayed Russians as aggressors, which has played to their country's advantage. With ordinary people joining the war as volunteers, their raw videos also gained significant traction on social media, especially of females making Molotov cocktails (homemade bombs). These videos were framed as a struggle for freedom and were widely shared by the users, thus, adding to the Ukrainian propaganda.⁴³

Technically speaking, at the state level, social media has disrupted the relationship between media and security officials, thus making it difficult for these security actors to manage information and thus preserve national security. Before the arrival of social media, state officials and journalists, more often than not, used to collaborate on issues of national security. However, on the other hand, social media facilitates the production of user-generated content, thus taking it out of the control of security and law enforcement organizations. Therefore, even sensitive security issues are openly discussed while inviting intense debate.⁴⁴

This significant change brought by social media has today taken away the power from the political and security elite as the 'only opinion maker.' Instead, the ordinary public is now as involved in the security debate as the policymakers.⁴⁵ Shefali Virkar, in this connection, has

⁴² Ian Garner, "We've Got to Kill Them": Responses to Bucha on Russian Social Media Groups," *Journal of Genocide Research* (May 9, 2022), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623528.2022.2074020>.

⁴³ Ciuriak, "The Role of Social Media in Russia's War on Ukraine," 3-4.

⁴⁴ Yongho Kim, *Social Media and National Security in South Korea* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2017)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

argued that this phenomenon is emerging as a serious challenge for traditional security actors, as the general masses are now equally able to influence the security policy.⁴⁶ Virkar believes that policymakers should now start extensively engaging the public on security issues while simultaneously ascertaining how social media harms the state's core values as far as national security is concerned.⁴⁷ However, it is almost unanimous conclusion that the social media activity of various individuals or groups can significantly harm national security. Therefore, social media must be extensively dominated by state authorities to enhance national security.⁴⁸ The next section explains how states can achieve this goal.

State Response

For Michael Erbschloe, blocking out social media amidst fear of resistance is the handiwork of weak authoritarian states. However, the evolving dynamics of warfare with social media assuming the front seat is also a reality and a threat to security forces. Hence, Erbschloe suggests that security establishments must adapt to the changing circumstances and prepare for social media warfare. He opines that,

Troops on any side of a conflict can use defensive and offensive social media warfare tactics. Defensive social media warfare tactics used in unconventional warfare theatres include self-validation, influence, reinforcement, persuasion of non-aligned entities, recruitment and indoctrination,

⁴⁶ Shefali Virkar, "The Mirror Has Two Faces: Terrorist Use of the Internet and the Challenges of Governing Cyberspace," in *National Security and Counter Intelligence in the Era of Cyber Espionage*, ed. Eugenie de Silva (Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2016), 1-20.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ishmael Mugari and Rudo Chisuvi, "Social media and national security in Zimbabwe: Embracing social media for national security and addressing social media threats," *African Security Review* 30, no. 1 (2021): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1857806>.

nullifying opponents, and relationship building. Offensive social media warfare tactics used in unconventional warfare theatres include deception, confusion, divisiveness, exposure, nullifying opponents, trolling, relationship building, and blended tactics.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Liam McLoughlin has argued that security apparatus must not only resort to social media for understanding the public alone. Instead, it should also be utilized for engaging with common people to build goodwill for themselves while simultaneously recruiting volunteers for narrative building.⁵⁰ In this context, he has highlighted that in the US, almost all security and intelligence agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Security Agency (NSA), and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), are using SMNs in their respective official capacities to their advantage.⁵¹

Following the US example, the UK has also introduced Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) in the aftermath of a murder in a police encounter in London that encouraged riots as consequence of social media campaign.⁵² Thus, social media has correctly been attributed as a public place requiring intelligence officials to keep a strict security vigil to protect national interests. Nonetheless, while doing so, officials are also urged to protect the liberty and security of the people. The SOCMINT aims to spread awareness among the public on social media as it has emerged as a success story in the UK, with millions of Twitter

⁴⁹ Erbschloe, *Social Media Warfare*, 58.

⁵⁰ Liam McLoughlin, Stephen Ward & Daniel W. B. Lomas, "'Hello, world': GCHQ, Twitter and social media engagement," *Intelligence and National Security* (2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2020.1713434>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² David Omand, Jamie Bartlett, and Karl Miller, "Introducing Social Media Intelligence," *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 6 (2012): 801-823, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2012.716965>.

and Facebook users regularly following its accounts.⁵³ The authorities in the UK have engaged the public in this connection on various social media platforms. In addition, these authorities also interact with the digital community on national security issues while making them aware of the potential threats on the one hand and capitalizing on their opinions to improve the working of their organizations on the other.⁵⁴

There are other significant studies like those of Marie-Andrée Weiss,⁵⁵ and Francisco Segado-Boj, and Jesús Díaz-Campo,⁵⁶ about freedom of expression on social media. Both these studies talk about protecting individual freedoms. Weiss has criticized the arbitrary censorship by the state authorities. However, the author realizes the diverse nature of values around the world as a value which is not very significant in the US or the EU can be highly important in the Muslim world. For example, the issue of blasphemy on social media can lead to violence in many Muslim states. So, according to Weiss, freedom of expression is necessary, but there ought to be a framework as well where hate speech and criminality on social media could be legally discouraged.⁵⁷

As far as Segado-Boj and Jesús Díaz-Campo are concerned, their study provides an intersection between the privacy of an individual, free speech, and access to information. They argue that the state authorities

⁵³ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Marie-Andrée Weiss, "Regulating Freedom of Speech on Social Media: Comparing the EU and the US Approach," *Sandford Law School*.

<https://law.stanford.edu/projects/regulating-freedom-of-speech-on-social-media-comparing-the-eu-and-the-u-s-approach/>

⁵⁶ Francisco Segado-Boj and Jesús Díaz-Campo, "social media and its intersections with free speech, freedom of information and privacy. An analysis," *Revista científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías emergentes* 18, no. 1 (2020), <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03213366/document>.

⁵⁷ Weiss, "Regulating of Speech on Social Media"

must not block these areas of public life. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the authors have also pointed out the significance of countering organized propaganda and misinformation, which can disrupt public life. Thereby, they are proponents of the state achieving a balance between securing national values and countering the threats on social media.⁵⁸

SMNs have also become a tool for military strategists to gauge public morale. For instance, the US military has developed a software known as Simulation Deck, which evaluates and analyses the data from different SMNs for intelligence purposes.⁵⁹

Thomas Elkjer Nissen thinks that social media is acting as a virtual battleground in conflicts the world over during recent times; therefore, militaries must also revolutionize this aspect. Nissen provides six solutions for engaging the enemy on social media. These are: "intelligence collection; (geo-) targeting, cyber operations, command and control, defence, and psychological warfare (inform and influence)."⁶⁰ Based on the principles of Nissen, it is recommended that security officials should counter anti-state narratives both overtly and covertly. Overtly and visible at the forefront, they must protect the state's core values, whereas acting clandestinely, they should form a digital army comprising trolls, real volunteers, and hired professionals.⁶¹ Nonetheless, governments ought to be also ready for constructive policing through social media. For instance, Kenyan police were able to manage the public in a hostage crisis in 2013 by engaging them through social media and instructing them not to panic.⁶²

⁵⁸ Boi and Campo, "Social Media and its Intersections"

⁵⁹ Yasmin Tadjeh, "Developing New Social Media Simulation Tools for Military Analysts," *National Defense* 102, no. 769 (2017): 41-42.

⁶⁰ Bialy, "Social Media," 76.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶² Murari and Chisuvi, "Social media and national security in Zimbabwe," 90-91.

Nonetheless, Virkar recommends that states should turn to digital governance in a democratic fashion to keep a check on social media, as this will ensure national security in digital spaces too. However, she also advises that SMNs must act on the phenomenon of anonymity at their respective platforms as these pseudo-accounts' aids in propaganda without the fear of accountability.⁶³ On the other hand, Chesney and Citron state that disinformation and deep fakes can be countered in courts, and creators can be arrested. Furthermore, intelligence officials must determine the hidden agenda of these activists.⁶⁴ The next section explores the literature to make sense of what has appeared from Pakistani academia on the perspectives discussed in the current section.

Social Media and Threats to the National Security of Pakistan

In Pakistan, the concept of national security and its relationship with social media is still evolving. Hence, social media as a threat to national security has been discussed in only a few academic works. In the paragraphs below, these works have been reviewed succinctly. Muhammad Khalil Khan and Cornelius B Pratt have researched about Pakistani military's engagement on social media to counter the emerging threats to national security. Their work focuses on the methods used by the military to deny space to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants on the social media landscape, who are involved in propagating their detrimental narrative on Facebook and Twitter. They have concluded that Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), responsible for managing public relations of the Armed Forces of Pakistan and furnishing information about the activities of defence

⁶³ Virkar, "The Mirror Has Two Faces," 14.

⁶⁴ Chesney and Citron, "Deep Fakes," 1-68.

forces to the media, has remained the key instrument in spreading awareness to common people in Pakistan.⁶⁵

Khan and Pratt state that ISPR's social media venture started in 2013 when Pakistan was deeply involved in the war against terrorism. The then Director General ISPR, Lieutenant General Asim Saleem Bajwa (Retired), was instrumental in devising a strategy to counter the TTP threat online.⁶⁶ For that purpose, dedicated teams were formed to confront the narrative of TTP and deny her space on various social media platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook. ISPR applied Framing Theory as a tool to respond to the enemy propaganda. The particular frames they applied were patriotism, Khawarij (out of the fold of Islam for defying the state), and terrorism. These frames were meant to win over people whom the Taliban persuaded that they were fighting for Islam. Nonetheless, the scope of Khan and Pratt's study has remained limited in analyzing the role of the Pakistani Army on social media in the war on terror. Their work lacks a description of the nature of various kinds of threats to the national security of Pakistan.

Similarly, Muhammad Asim and Hashmat Ali have also explored threats from social media in the context of Pakistan. However, the scope of their work is limited to terrorism and cyber-attacks, whereas, in connection with social media, they have only gauged the presence of terrorist groups like TTP and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on different platforms.⁶⁷ However, by highlighting social media as a threat to national security, they have elaborated on how a Pakistani expatriate woman carried out a terrorist act in the US while also inspiring relatives

⁶⁵ Muhammad Khalil Khan and Cornelius B Pratt, "Strategic communications: The Pakistan military's use of social media against terrorism," *Media, War and Conflict* (2020): 1-36, DOI: 10.1177/1750635220972127.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Asim and Hashmat Ali, "Impact of Social Media on National Security in the Face of Globalization: Pakistan's Perspective," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2019): 1-25.

back home in Pakistan through Facebook. She was responsible for a mass shooting in San Bernardino in the US in 2015.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, apart from this case study, the article mainly deliberates on cyber-attack issues, which are beyond the scope of this work.

Ali Moeen Nawazish has discussed the issue of religious extremism on social media. He has cited the example of Noreen Laghari while highlighting how Leghari got influenced by her extremist friends to carry out a suicide attack. However, the security forces timely intervened and foiled the bombing attempt planned at an Easter ceremony in Lahore in 2017. Significantly, Nawazish has stressed the need for checks and balances by parents on social media usage by their children so that they do not negatively get influenced by extremist narratives on social media.⁶⁹

On the other hand, Kiran Hassan has provided a comparative analysis of social media vis-à-vis traditional media. According to her, traditional media has propagated extremist and terrorist ideology more than social media. As per her, social media users are generally more interested in entertainment and sports. Therefore, she even argues that social media has scarcely been employed for political participation in Pakistan. Hassan opines that traditional media in Pakistan has not been anxious in picking up the stories from social media. However, she has acknowledged that the terrorists have utilized social media for recruitment purposes.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, Hassan's work has ignored the crucial aspect of hybrid war, in which social media acts as an effective tool. She has also

⁶⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶⁹ Ali Moeen Nawazish, "Social Media kai Fawaid Ya Nuqsanat," *Column Kaar*, April 20, 2017, <https://www.socialmediakaifwaidyanuksanatbyalimoeennawazish/>

⁷⁰ Kiran Hassan, "Social Media, Media Freedom and Pakistan's War on Terror," *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* (2018): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2018.1448339>.

overlooked the aspect of political instability spread by disinformation on varying SMNs. Moreover, her arguments on the use of social media for politicization appear to be abstract at best, as the recent episodes in the political arena have confirmed that Pakistanis significantly rely on social media for political participation not only at the individual level but equally at the political party level. In fact, Twitter, followed by YouTube and Facebook, have almost taken over traditional media for politicization purposes in Pakistan.⁷¹

On the interrelationship between social media and national security in Pakistan, Amna Rafiq has focused on cyber threats such as stealing identity, penetrating critical infrastructure security, and women's harassment. As far as social media is concerned, her work mostly contains the response proffered by the Pakistani government in tackling threats to Pakistan's security. In this regard, she outlines the functioning of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) introduced in 2016 while stressing that Pakistan's government has perceived the threats from digital domains as a single problem, which in fact, are not thus requiring a response at the platform-to-platform level.⁷² The article, though, contains information on how PECA 2016 has been beneficial in curbing hate speech and glorification of terrorism; however, it does not provide any details related to social media acting as an effective tool for targeting national security.

⁷¹ Lubna Zaheer, "Use of Social Media and Political Participation among University Students," *Pakistan Vision* (2019): 17, no. 1, 278-299, http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/studies/PDF-FILES/Artical-13_v17-1-16.pdf; Taufiq Ahmad, Aima Alvi, and Muhammad Ittefaq. "The Use of Social Media on Political Participation Among University Students: An Analysis of Survey Results From Rural Pakistan," *SAGE Open*, (July 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019864484>; Saif Ur Rehman and Zhao Shurong, "Organizational use of Social Media and its impacts on Politics: Evidence from Pakistan," *SAGE Open* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.16862542.v1>.

⁷² Amna Rafiq, "Challenges of Securitizing Cyberspace in Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2019): 90-101, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48544290>.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research ascertains that national security is a subjective phenomenon. Accordingly, in addition to the aspects of national sovereignty and integrity, national security is also dependent on national values. Pakistan is under constant threat from social media, disinformation as part of a coordinated hybrid war that has been launched against Pakistan particularly by India. External also employ internal actors for propaganda purposes, who question the efficacy of these values and attempt to subvert the populace in general and the youth in particular while trying to turn them against the national narrative. On the other hand, there is a significant gap in the literature related to Pakistan, as reviewed above, while the implications of social media on national security have not been explained in detail in the scholarly literature pertaining to the country.

Along with this gap in the interrelationship of national security and national values, a few other gaps have also been observed. For instance, the existing literature only touches upon the use of social media for terrorist activities. However, very few significant studies have been conducted that focus on the spread of extremism, anarchy, and political instability, as well as unleashing of hybrid war through social media by external actors, both state and non-state, for their vested purposes. Moreover, in the case of Pakistan, the crucial aspects, including regulating social media, e-governance, social media intelligence, and hybrid war, remain to be generally ignored. On the other hand, the scholarly work from the West has effectively outlined the nature of external and internal threats stirred by social media, which need to be capitalized upon in the context of Pakistan.

Restructuring Strategic Maritime Interests and Blockade Politics in the Indian Ocean

Dr. Muhammad Shareh Qazi¹

Irfan Farooq²

Abstract

China Pakistan Economic Corridor commences its original intent and purpose once it ventures beyond the shores of Gwadar. Alongside this crucial yet strategically well-placed harbor lies a significant array of other ports and maritime interests connected to the Strait of Hormuz. Within this framework, Gulf and the Middle East have observed both CPEC and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with quiet concern, hypothesizing what can be termed 'Blockade Politics.' The main idea behind this manoeuvre would be to assess contending nations' maritime potential and naval prowess in their ability to enforce or counteract a naval blockade. It implies that, like the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz might also posture aggressive economic and military traffic, causing it to incite friction in national interest preservation. For Pakistan, having to develop Gwadar and, subsequently, more port regions adjoining this maritime domain, instituting mutualization of economic interests is an uphill task. Beyond economic integration, however, having to revisit its naval doctrines and upgrade its naval

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potential will also be a prerequisite for synchronizing with contending parties. This paper analyses a comprehensive assessment of Pakistan's contemporary maritime challenges against the backdrop of CPEC. It also takes impetus in evaluating core requirements to address blockade politics and counter-blockade dispositions that might arise in Gulf, the Middle East, and other sections connected within the Indian Ocean. The study results highlight the significance of modernization and the induction of new naval platforms and doctrines. It also postulates the importance of strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China in creating favorable grounds to address challenges and vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Maritime Security, Naval Blockade, Pakistan Navy, Regional Competitiveness, Indian Ocean

Introduction

The Arabian Sea, the northern region of the Indian Ocean, is essential for its surrounding countries and strategically for Trans-regional actors. The belt and road initiative (BRI), with a significant focus on connecting land and maritime economic routes, is described as 'an expression of grand strategy.'³ Economic, military, regional, and international actors recognize the convergence of interests in the Arabian Sea as the nerve center of all future strategic decisions. As a result, the overall influence cannot be overlooked. Consequently, the possibility of preventing strategies cannot be ignored, and a future maritime paradigm shift is an affirmative possibility. To maintain or counteract the hegemony of this region, each superpower and its subsidiary regional partners might opt

³ Xiaolu, Li Xiaolu Li. "A Chinese Perspective on CPEC: Background, Benefits and Risks." *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 4, no. 2 (2015): 1-16.

to institute naval blockades to control maritime traffic to and from this vital choke point. The discussion can be organized around the subject of the sort of maritime Shift in the Indian Ocean, the involvement of Arabian sea states in the Shift, and the impact of international actors on regional stakeholders. BRI has most actively pursued fulfilment through completing the CPEC and its most vital project, the port of Gwadar.⁴ However, this activity raises significant concerns about the nature and intensity of the Arabian Sea maritime strategy. It can be argued that CPEC, in the larger BRI strategy, administers a doctrinal shift for all actors and contenders due to its geo-strategic and geopolitical compulsions. It also impresses the region's military and economic value, necessitating a technological shift for all concerned navies. The apprehension that China intends to connect Pakistani ports with Iranian ports and, by definition, control the entire coastline is a threat seriously felt by contending nations.⁵ In this aspect, what role will Gwadar play in regional sea politics, as it is a significant concern for India strategically, for Middle East countries economically, and for the US both strategically and economically? Also, considering how the US and its allies are gradually linking Indian Ocean interests with those in the Pacific, what will be the effects of AUKUS, AUNZUS, and QUAD on the intra-regional politics of the Indo-Pacific? Once these scenarios and strategies come into play, how and through what design would Pakistan Navy restructure itself to suit the scenario?

In Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) reserve pivotal importance for ensuring a smooth international trading system via sea and as a strategic pathway during war and conflict. In times of strategic posturing, the primary focus is reserved for states that have vantage on chokepoints and junctions among SLOCs. By carefully assessing global

⁴ Lu, Shulin. "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Flagship and Exemplary Project of "One Belt and One Road"." *Strategic Studies* 34, no. 4/1 (2014).

⁵ Baruah, D. "What is happening in the Indian Ocean." (2021).

maritime trade routes and essential ports, the Indian Ocean is signified as one point where almost all significant SLOCs converge. It also houses some essential chokepoints that offer economic opportunities and strategic dispositions. Chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz thus become even more crucial as it is divided between some of the most competitively charged state partners; Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and India.⁶ With the advent of BRI and its most illustrious subsidiary, CPEC, the Strait of Hormuz has become even more crucial for external actors like the US. American naval interests are sufficiently deployed in and around the Middle East and render a complex array of services ranging from maintaining deterrence to counter-piracy operations. This region has become a hotbed of converging interests and overlapping strategic necessities. As a junction for most of the world's oil trade and one of the critical networks of ports managing global economic transactions via sea, threat calculus in and around the Hormuz becomes one crucial concern.⁷

The Indian Ocean reserves a particular focus in this maritime competitiveness where America and India tend to make it part of a much bigger containment strategy against China, link it to the Pacific Ocean and call it Indo-Pacific posturing. Despite consenting to the value of Indo-Pacific connectivity, China sees the same as a linkage mechanism between its trading interests within the two oceans. Subsidiary actors like India, Pakistan, Iran, and the Middle East become principal actors as their posturing preferences would decide which superpower is prosperous in recreating SLOCs in the region as per its strategic

⁶ Mikheev, Alexey, Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal, Irina Kapustina, and Amen Butt. "Maritime trade in the Indian Ocean: value-focused thinking for BRI and CPEC by employing A'WOT hybrid technique." In E3S Web of Conferences, vol. 258, p. 02030. EDP Sciences, 2021.

⁷ Hassan, Muhammad Abbas. "Growing China-India Competition in the Indian Ocean." *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2019): 77-89.

requirements. This activity is restructuring maritime interests as it creates an environment where a standalone maritime strategy would not be able to exact the dividends it expects. CPEC, in the larger BRI, is kept flexible and fluid to allow other partners and willing stakeholders to join in. It allows China sufficient leverage to extend a convergence of interests by offering significant dividends to willing partners. It implies that if any state wants to be a part of the CPEC arm of BRI, it would have to allow the amalgamation of its maritime interests within the larger interest pool created by China.⁸

America's willingness to extend its maritime naval through a joint Indo-Pacific strategy has attracted a host of new horizons in multilateral cooperation. Initiatives like QUAD, AUKUS, and ANZUS allow America to extend its range by inducting partners from important maritime junctions to create a network of strategic roadblocks to prevent any outreach aspired to by China. It means that all subsidiary states are willing to offer a blockade service against potential threats and are then supplied with appropriate equipment to carry out the same. This atmosphere divorces individual/standalone interest preservation as each subsidiary state must address the influences and strategic requirements of a significant power that controls such initiatives. QUAD, AUKUS, and ANZUS states must keep their end of the bargain by aligning their maritime interests with the US, and CPEC-BRI partners would have to approve and adjust as per requirements set forth by China. Defensive strategies further consolidate this restructuring environment with a dual-use implication where a defensive blockade that prevents war can also offensively block the economic interests of rival states.⁹ This implies that for the maritime security makeup in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, convergence of interests and impact of such initiatives will

⁸ Ume, Farwa, and Siddiq Arhama. "CPEC: Prospects of OBOR and South-South Cooperation." The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (2017).

⁹ de Bruyn, Martyn. "AUKUS and its significance for transatlantic relations." *Stosunki Międzynarodowe—International Relations* 2, no. 3 (2022): 3.

eventually recalibrate the strategic dimensions in the region. For the principal states coordinating these developments, like the US and China, such measures mean enhancing the outreach of regional stakeholders like India and Pakistan.

The case can be made in favor of blockade politics as such political alignments, and maritime prioritization requires contending parties to avoid accelerated escalation. Naval blockades have proved to be quite a decisive strategy in curtailing adventurism and are seen as a risk reduction strategy aimed at dissuading unwarranted escalatory trajectories among competing states. Even during the Cuban Missile Crisis, naval blockades installed by the US prevented any unwarranted aggression from the Soviet Union-Cuba enterprise, ultimately fulfilling both contending nations' objectives. Even in contemporary times, we see states in and around the Indian Ocean administering or experiencing naval blockades as a dissuasion mechanism. The Blockade of Yemen¹⁰ is one instance where Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners sought to utilize this strategy in curtailing Iran's influence in favor of Houthi rebel groups.

China was able to opt for a blockade strategy against Taiwan during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996¹¹. Major powers taking an antagonistic view of CPEC and BRI would also opt for a similar strategy under its containment policy where denial of access and accessibility would be ensured through a naval and land-based blockade to create an atmosphere of deterrence with minimal risks in play.¹² Maritime and SLOC politics in the Indian Ocean hints at states administering or preparing for such practices through joint naval operations and

¹⁰ Oxford Analytica. "Yemen conflict carries risks for global shipping." *Emerald Expert Briefings* oxa-n-db (2015).

¹¹ Chou, T. L. "Crisis and dysfunction of spatial development and management in Taiwan." *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 16, no. 1 (1998): 69-84.

¹² Wu, Xiangning, and You Ji. "The military drivers of China's Belt and Road endeavor." *China Review* 20, no. 4 (2020): 223-244.

exercises. Capability assessment and endurance of naval forces in maintaining such a blockade has culminated in a series of technology transfer initiatives, weapons procurement, and modernization efforts by subsidiary states and joint ventures, ensuring the sustainability of such objectives.

The maritime security matrix argues that states apply a securitization framework within the security practice mechanism to design and implement strategies and calibrate alliances. For understanding this paradigm, understanding the Indo-Pacific strategy within the securitization matrix is essential in designing and predicting the future of maritime posturing and nature of competition within the region.

Paradigm Shifts in Maritime Strategy and its impacts on SLOCs

The value of maritime restructuring in the Indian ocean was always a cause for concern, even before and during the colonial era. Linking the Pacific Ocean, with all its contenders and controversies, further enhances maritime competitiveness for states interacting in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean and its sub-regions are increasingly crucial, strategically and militarily, because of the importance of commercial routes that supply essential resources to the globe. It is a vital hub for trade between the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. The disruption in this area will compromise the security of the world's energy supply. Major economies, including China, Japan, & South Korea, in particular, depend on energy imports across the Malacca Strait¹³. Sitting close to chokepoints connecting sea routes in the Indian Ocean necessitates maintaining a military presence, and such presence can influence SLOC activity. Seven choke spots exist worldwide, three of

¹³ Baruah, D. "What is happening in the Indian Ocean." (2021).

which are in the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Malacca, which runs between Malaysia, Singapore, and the Indonesian coastline of Sumatra, is the first choke point. The Strait of Hormuz, which runs between the Persian Gulf to the broader Indian Ocean through the Arabian sea, is the second. The third choke point is at Bab-el-Mandeb, which links the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean at the Horn of Africa through the Suez Canal.¹⁴ Apart from these chokepoints, strategic locations such as the Lombok strait, the Sunda strait, and the Mozambique Channel, if kept under an aggressive maritime policy, can severely impact entry and exist points for major regional and global stakeholders.

Maritime activity at vital junctions is not only an economic concern but also a military challenge. State parties can offensively and defensively deploy naval power to impact trade. They can also control maritime traffic to observe and detect traffic patterns of adversary states and adjust their strategy accordingly. Another major challenge is the geographic complexity of the littoral states in the Indian Ocean, primarily impacted by diplomatic stances, alliance patterns, bilateral disputes, internal conflicts, and effects of superpower influence. Since detecting sub-surface vessels in open water is highly difficult and expensive, carrying out a surveillance operation close to the chokepoint is crucial to keeping track of submarine movement. Therefore, any country with a significant impact on the Indian Ocean would be tangentially related to the nations along the coastline.

Indo-Pacific Maritime strategies of the US and China in Aperture

The main concerns of the US in the Indian Ocean are to ensure the security of international shipping and maintain the safety of routes

¹⁴ Michel, David. "Russell Sticklor, eds. 2012." Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges.

through to the chokepoints at the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the South China Sea. As the Indian Ocean is developing into a significant center of power, politics to preserve the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. The fundamental goal of the US foreign policy in the Indian Ocean is to protect its national interests since it cannot let any state become a major player. This region is now strategically significant due to the volume of movement and expanding trade prospects in this area.¹⁵ The US offers five goals for the Indo-Pacific area; increase regional wealth, promote an open and secure Indo-Pacific, foster regional linkages, strengthen Indo-pacific Security, and increase regional resistance to transnational threats.¹⁶ The USA seeks to protect the Persian Gulf and Bab el Mandeb, two chokepoints in the Indian Ocean, by maintaining its presence in this region. Restructuring maritime strategy for the US is an impending prerequisite to prevent any other state from challenging this position.

China has made significant military and commercial investments, mainly in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. China is currently enlarging its maritime domain by significant investments in several ventures in the Indian Ocean, notably in the Arabian Sea, on both military and commercial levels. By building CPEC, China is now claiming deep-water regions and strengthening itself as an emergent sea power. It is also extending its sphere of maritime control to the African continent. The marine profile must be expanded to meet the resource needs essential for projecting a global power strategy. Even while China has not publicly stated its long-term objectives for the Indian Ocean, it is evident that they are concentrating on developing the tools necessary to conduct extensive military operations. China is concentrating on the following three goals for such Indian Ocean region: 1) China is concerned

¹⁵ Khetran, Mir Sherbaz. "The potential and prospects of Gwadar Port." *Strategic Studies* 34 (2014): 70-89.

¹⁶ House, White. "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States." Washington: The White House (2022).

about protecting its citizens, investments, and soft power influence in the region by engaging in non-combat activities; 2) China is more particularly worried about terrorism in the region and seeks to engage in counterterrorism activities jointly with partners; and 3) China is particularly worried about the presence of its main rivals and adversaries in the region and seeks to gather intelligence data to support operational requirements, even its a conflict.¹⁷

China primarily imports natural gas and oil from Russia through two sea routes: the Indian Ocean and the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipelines. As a result, in contrast to its offshore military fleet in Djibouti, China has developed ports around the Indo-Pacific to secure SLOCs. Over the past ten years, China has made investments in 35 ports all over the world to create marine connectivity. Of these 35 ports, 14 are situated in the Indian Ocean, while three are in the Pacific Ocean. More than 85% of China's oil imports go via the Straits of Malacca unnoticed by the Indian Navy and the Indian Ocean. Additionally, because the South China Sea (SCS) and the Indian Ocean are both parts of China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR), China must safeguard its sea communication routes throughout the area.¹⁸

India's Maritime Posture in Indian Ocean Region

China and India are turning their attention to the Indian Ocean region, and both see other nations as rivals. The Indian Ocean area is significant economically for India, and IOR is where their security and strategic interests reside. India's position in the world is considered a protector of a global system with the assistance of the United States of America; at the same time, China seeks to consolidate its grip over the major ports

¹⁷ House, White. "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States." Washington: The White House (2022).

¹⁸ Balasubramaniam, Thangavel K., and Ashok Kumar Murugesan. "China's Rising Missile and Naval Capabilities in the Indo-Pacific Region: Security Implications for India and its Allies." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Air University Press*. June 8 (2020).

to get an edge economically and strategically¹⁹. Currently, 95 percent of commerce by volume and over 70 percent of trade by value are carried out in the Indian Ocean region. India is also the fourth-largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with 45 percent of the total volume arriving by sea. The Indian Navy estimates that 93 percent of India's oil imports come from ships.²⁰ In 2015, the Indian Navy published its maritime policy, "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy," which focuses briefly on the demands of the Indian Navy in terms of maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. India's marine development must keep pace with its economic growth. The IOR's new vision has strongly emphasized the development and prosperity of the area and the advancement of India's vital national economic interests. The goal of the Sagarmala initiative was to promote port-led growth. Due to their significance in commerce and economic growth, this initiative intended to construct a vital port infrastructure and modernize them.²¹

The fifth-largest Navy in the world is the Indian Navy. Indian Naval has rapidly modernized its operating capabilities to expand its freshwater resources and navy capabilities and extend its supremacy in the Indian Ocean area. As a step toward becoming a Blue Water Navy, this is also a component of India's strategic ambition to become a regional and global force. The Indian Navy has been concentrating on creating indigenous platforms, systems, sensors, and weaponry as part of the country's modernization and development of its marine capabilities. The Indian Navy has 43 warships, including an aircraft carrier, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, and conventional- and nuclear-

¹⁹ Thakker, Aman. "A rising India in the Indian Ocean needs a strong Navy." Center for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved from https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/181017_NewPerspectives_FINAL.pdf (2018).

²⁰ Jaishankar, D. "Indian Ocean region: A pivot for India's growth. Brookings." (2016).

²¹ Kanodia, H. "India's SAGAR policy in the Indian Ocean region. Diplomatist." (2020).

powered submarines, under construction as of 2020. By 2050, the Indian Navy hopes to have a robust fleet of 200 ships and 500 aircraft. A senior naval officer described the Indian Navy's plans to develop a 200-ship navy over ten years in 2013. According to a declaration by the Chief of Naval Staff in December 2020, India's fleet has changed from one purchased to one built. Indian shipyards, both governmental and commercial, are building all 41 ships now in the works.²²

In developing naval weapons domestically, IN had taken a two-pronged strategy. First, independence has enabled the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) institutions and companies to reach their full potential. Second, IN has explored the possibility of a collaboration in either a Joint Venture (JV) or a Transfer of Technology (TOT) between the suitable actors and the national industry wherever technology was easily accessible and collaboration was feasible.²³

New Delhi views the CPEC as a challenge to its plans for regional hegemony in the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, and the Strait of Hormuz. It is because China and the former state enjoy similar economic benefits as significant trading partners with India. Indian analysts believe that Beijing using Gwadar might pose a long-term security risk since it would provide China with a tactical advantage in the Indian Ocean and Strait of Hormuz. India has openly expressed worries about the CPEC because of this. Narendra Modi, the prime minister of India, has referred to the

²² Saeed, Maira Afzazze, and Umbreen Javaid. "INDIA'S NAVAL EXPANSION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN." *Margalla Papers* 24, no. 1 (2020): 67-80.

²³ Mukherjee, Anit, and C. Raja Mohan, eds. *India's Naval Strategy and Asian Security*. London and NY: Routledge, 2016.

CPEC as "unacceptable." Indian Foreign Minister Sujatha Singh stated that New Delhi had raised the topic of CPEC and Gwadar.²⁴

After signing the agreement, which was restructured on the basic principle of the earlier agreement signed in 2015, Indian Foreign Secretary Subramanian Jaishankar stated that relations with nations inside the Indian Ocean region foster an atmosphere of peace and stability are significant pillars of India's foreign policy. India is looking for strategic sites abroad amid growing concerns about being ringed by an aggressive China. In August of last year, Beijing formally inaugurated its first military outpost in Djibouti, East Africa. Analysts argue that Chinese investments are starting to encircle India in nations like Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka, which have endorsed Beijing's grandiose "Belt and Road Initiative," a more significant concern (BRI).²⁵ Additionally, the CPEC-induced strengthening of Pakistan's economy will increase the country's military budget. Given its advanced military capabilities, Pakistan would not be interested in bilateral trade and investment collaboration with India, which is necessary to bridge the gap between the two major regional players.²⁶

From the perspective of India, the threat to New Delhi's interests within the Indian Ocean region is prompted India to strengthen its strategic partnership with the US. Due to the expected complexity of the Pakistan Navy with the completion of the Gwadar port, Pakistan would have a better chance of acquiring a sea-based second-strike capability.

²⁴ Ray, Purnendu Sekhar. "SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT AND THE 21ST CENTURY MARITIME SILK ROAD" EFFECT ON GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS AND MARITIME CONNECTIVITY." In Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, vol. 77, pp. 828-834. Indian History Congress, 2016.

²⁵ Kaura, Vinay. "Securing India's economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific." Indian Journal of Asian Affairs 31, no. 1/2 (2018): 37-52.

²⁶ CHANG, YC, and M. I. Khan. "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Maritime Security Collaboration: A Growing Bilateral Interests. Maritime Business Review, 4 (2), 217-235." (2019).

Combined with the likelihood that CPEC and Gwadar can give the Chinese Navy the logistical assistance they want, the above scenario would be much more harmful to India. As a result, India has unexpectedly allowed access to US military sites in exchange for the US importing advanced technology from India. Although the US has not publicly aired its concerns about the CPEC, given that the US geopolitical purpose is to reduce the likelihood of any international force emerging in the global arena, it can be assumed that the US will not remain neutral toward the project.²⁷

Strategic Paradigm shifts in the Indian Ocean and its impacts on the Pakistan Navy

Considering Pakistan's geo-strategic position in a maritime context, it is housed in one of the most densely navigable regions of the Indian Ocean. Pakistan Navy is not only charged with contributing to growing maritime concerns in its proximity, but as an extension of CPEC, it is also required to consolidate significant economic, military, and strategic interests within this region. Another added responsibility it has to perform is a growing bilateral maritime insecurity generated by India and its naval procurements from the USA through significant strategic interactions.²⁸ In this context, Pakistan and Pakistan's Navy would be compelled to restructure their maritime objectives and enhance their operational capabilities beyond the strait of Hormuz and the Indian ocean. The argument that any hostility at the ocean front between any of the principal or subsidiary actors or both will seriously impact state parties in proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, the significant impact of such dispositions would directly fall on Pakistan and its Navy. In this scenario, considering India's military modernization in the naval domain and America's amalgamation of Indian ocean interests with the Pacific,

²⁷ Kanodia, H. "India's SAGAR policy in the Indian Ocean region. Diplomatist." (2020).

²⁸ Lu, Shulin. "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Flagship and Exemplary Project of "One Belt and One Road"." *Strategic Studies* 34, no. 4/1 (2014).

Pakistan would require extensive threat assessment of such eventualities. The argument in favor of restructuring SLOCs is based on the idea that each Navy participating in the Indian Ocean is stretched between four objectives; alignment preferences, national interests, strategic atmosphere, and circumstantial amendments.²⁹ China has initiated the BRI project as a golden opportunity for developing infrastructure and trade cooperation between nations. Pakistan will be a bridge between China and the other nations. For China, CPEC is a very significant project as this project is a key to their power expansion in the Indian Ocean region to counter the US threat and maintain their dominance in the region. Now, after the development of Gwadar port, Pakistan would be directly overlooking the world's busiest oil trade from an enhanced perspective. It is the grand strategy of China to link the south China sea, south pacific sea, and Indian ocean. In the Indian Ocean region, Gwadar will be acting as a counterbalance strategy against the strategic ties of the US and India and their interest in the region. The Gwadar port is considered the linchpin of the CPEC project due to its strategic location near the international Maritime Energy chokepoint. Pakistan navy is referring to Gwadar as the third Naval base of Pakistan and considers this an improvement in the country's defense in deep sea waters.³⁰

Pakistan Navy's role is vital in ensuring stability and security in the Arabian sea as most of the international sea lines of communications are near the Pakistan coast. Indian Navy, backed by the USA, is rapidly adding a new platform to their Maritime fleet, including the nuclear platforms, which is increasing the strategic instability in the region.³¹ As

²⁹ Safdar, Aiysha. "The China-Pakistan economic corridor—Its maritime dimension and Pakistan navy." *Strategic studies* 35, no. 3 (2015): 1-19.

³⁰ Khetran, Mir Sherbaz. "The potential and prospects of Gwadar Port." *Strategic Studies* 34 (2014): 70-89.

³¹ Jalil, Ghazala Yasmin. "India's Development of Sea-based Nuclear Capabilities." *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2018): 34-47

in result of CPEC, there will be an increase in economic activities in the Indian Ocean region. In this context, the responsibilities of the Pakistan Navy will be increased in many directions, from ensuring the Security of SLOCs to shielding their ports and coastal infrastructure. It will stretch the existing capability of the Pakistan Navy. Therefore, it needs to reorganize and modernize the Navy. Currently, Pakistan Navy is focusing on filling the operational and technological gaps as part of its modernization plan. Admiral Zafar Mehmood Abbasi, former Chief of Naval Staff of the Pakistan Navy, indicated that the future preferences of the Pakistan Navy are to achieve the next level of combat readiness and offensive capabilities by adding new platforms into the fleet and upgrading existing platforms, including the transfer of technology and the upcoming new project. The modernization plan offered by the Pakistan Navy addresses four principal concerns; necessitated modernization as part of routine, counter-measuring naval arms race initiated by India, coping with additional requirements demanded by the regional geo-strategic environment, and exploration of avenues of strategic cooperation with China. The modernization plan also focuses on projecting threats and challenges emanating from restructuring the Indian Ocean and addressing the possibility of installing naval blockades by adversaries.³²

Pakistan navy understands its operation constraints and is cognizant of current friction in and around the Indian ocean. The idea that larger navies operating in the region will perceive the state of Hormuz as a manageable chokepoint is a plausible scenario. Quantitatively speaking, America and its allies would successfully run a naval blockade which is a primary concern for Pakistan as it will be a direct effect. In this aspect Pakistan Navy, in its modernization policy, hopes to increase the number of vessels and warships with a preference

³² Hafiz, Anees. "CPEC Challenges, Seaward Economy & Pakistan Navy." *Defence Journal* 21, no. 10 (2018): 27-30.

for large offshore patrol vessels. This procurement would allow the Pakistan navy to actively monitor any deployments by adversaries that indicate the creation or execution of a blockade. To consolidate this strategy, Pakistan invests in procuring Chinese Yuan class Submarines to enhance its counter-blocked efforts. The current submarine fleet in service with Pakistan Navy is also being modernized to serve a similar objective from a defensive angle. In this aspect, the Pakistan navy has initiated the upgradation of PNS/M Hashmat, PNS/M Hurmat, PNS/M Hamza, PNS/M Saad, and PNS/M Khalid. Upgradation of these vessels ensures that Pakistan Navy can detect, preempt and intercept any offensive posturing adversaries. Pakistan Navy tends to upgrade its Sonar systems to enhance its detection capabilities.³³

India has been investing a lot in the procurements of the Naval fleet, including enhancing its nuclear platforms. To minimize the threat from the increasing Indian influence in the Indian Ocean, Pakistan Navy tested its first Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile, Babur-3, in January 2017 as a counterbalance to India's Missile development in the Sagarika K-Missile family.³⁴ The growing concern for Pakistan Navy prompting this modernization is aimed at averting a full-blown arms race while maintaining strategic equilibrium. To boost its counter-offensive anti blockade capacity, Pakistan has also increased research and development in acquiring hypersonic ship-launched anti-ship weapon systems and anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft. The recent procurement of long-range maritime patrol aircraft, the establishment of Naval Research and development institutes, and long-endurance UAVs and UCAVs are all part of defensive modernizations concerning avoiding vulnerabilities.³⁵ The modernization strategy is a

³³ Sodhi, Capt HPS. "PAKISTAN NAVY'S EMERGING UNDERWATER THREAT."

³⁴ Clary, Christopher, and Ankit Panda. "Safer at Sea? Pakistan's Sea-Based Deterrent and Nuclear Weapons Security." *The Washington Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2017): 149-168.

³⁵ Singh, Abhijit. "Unmanned and Autonomous Vehicles and Future Maritime Operations in Littoral Asia." *ORF Special Report* (2016): 3-12.

crucial indicator of Pakistan's understanding of maritime restructuring in the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean. Induction of defensive and counterbalancing strategies with strategic partnerships is a core indicator that all states, principal or subsidiary, understand the impact of maritime restructuring on Naval doctrines. It also indicates structural probabilities based on threat and capability assessment that the formation of a Naval blockade might prove to be a possible eventuality between contending parties. The asymmetric Naval posturing, modernization, and strategic dispositions indicate that nuclear-armed competitors will likely attempt to preserve deterrence through such measures. A similar strategy was noted during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Taiwan Strait crisis, where escalatory tendencies were minimized through the institution of a Naval blockade.

Conclusion

Due to the connectivity between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific will cover the vulnerabilities of the Indian Ocean, and the vulnerability of the Indian Ocean will settle in the Pacific Ocean due to the trans-oceanic problem. Now when we talk about the Pakistan navy restructuring in the context of the Indian Ocean, we need to look at the maritime restructuring of the Pakistan navy at two levels. 1: What is the posture of Pakistan; defensive or offensive, when it comes to the maritime restructuring of SLOCs and the possibility of active blockade politics 2: Does the Pakistan Navy have the competitive offensive and defensive technology necessary to protect the increasing area of operation and to compete with their adversaries. This concern highly addresses core requirements in the maritime domain as a consequence of the 21st-century security matrix in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Pakistan Navy is trying to upgrade the existing technology by collaborating with China under the CPEC in the Pakistan Navy modernization plan. However, the current trajectory in which India and

The US's willingness to transform Indian ocean maritime requirements is a crucial challenge for the future of this modernization. The current situation of maritime restructuring in the Indian Ocean is based on a vast array of considerations. One principal consideration is an amalgamation of interests of Pacific Ocean nations with that of Indian Ocean nations. Projects like AUKUS, ANZUS, QUAD, and military exercises between South Asian and ASEAN Nations are a convergence of almost all vital global SLOCs chokepoints. Another consideration is the military modernization of the Naval platform by significant contenders within the Indian Ocean. US and China, along with their maritime doctrine, have inadvertently or consciously triggered an arms race between subsidiary maritime nations around the strait of Hormuz. US-Iran rivalry, India-Pakistan competition, and Saudi-Yemen Crisis all have a solid maritime dimension warranting appropriate modernization of Naval postures of each contending nation. This competition may be termed either a fallout of Pacific Ocean competitiveness, a domino effect of maritime priorities of superpowers, a trickle-down effect of strategic partnerships and alliances, or even a novel circumstance of major geo-economic initiatives. In all eventualities mentioned here, principal indicators cannot be avoided; firstly, restructuring SLOCs in the Indian Ocean and reorganizing maritime priorities toward prospective blockade politics.

Pakistan Navy may become an auxiliary navy; then, it will be difficult for Pakistan to handle the maritime flow by CPEC. Pakistan navy will be more compressed as this is compressed now as well. Pakistan navy will overburden. It would be strategic fatigue for Pakistan Navy by the increasing importance of Gwadar port. Pakistan needs to bolster its Navy to cater to its threats as the maritime footprint of China will disturb America, and the maritime footprint of America will encourage India to stable an environment in this region which will create a blockade. India is working on a technological transfer intelligence sharing program. Pakistan must also partner with China on intelligence sharing and

technology transfer programs. As the outlook of the region has changed and, in this environment, an outdated navy or a supplementary navy is not suitable and Pakistani officials have said so many times that the biggest challenge for Pakistan in maritime restructuring would be the sustainability of maritime interest as in such an environment, there is an increasing number of partners and contenders as well. Due to the increasing tensions in the Indian Ocean, it is our primary requirement to upgrade the Pakistan navy.

USA's projects in the Indo-Pacific, like AUKUS and ANZUS, are considered an aggressive step in the maritime region and the concept of Five Eyes in which they started an intelligence-sharing program. Also, under the QUAD project and Five Eyes, India can duplicate the USA as the USA is enabling India in the Indo-Pacific region to establish its dominance. Furthermore, if any of these projects work as per their expectations, then it would be a natural outcome of the blockade. Moreover, this situation if Pakistan cannot create bilateral relationships which China in the context of technology transfer and intelligence sharing programs, then the Pakistan navy will look like a backup navy in this situation of the blockade and the situation of Pakistan's confrontation with India, Pakistan cannot afford to become a backup navy. With the changing dynamics of maritime politics and increasing the importance of Gwadar port, Pakistan Navy will be overburdened. Pakistan Navy needs to have almost double the current size of the Navy due to the increasing area of operation.

Furthermore, in this undermining situation, the Pakistan navy must grow from its resources, technology, technological expertise, and doctrine. As in the security calculus of Pakistan navy is considered a defensive force, although the Pakistan navy has some offensive as well but only in severe conditions. Pakistan Navy needs to have some offensive platforms, some defensive platforms, and some strategies.

Causal Analysis of India's Response to Maritime Security Debate at the UNSC

Dr. Sehrish Qayyum¹

Abstract

UNSC debate on the maritime security-initiated discussion on response and reaction plan not only for particular countries and regions overall. The Eastern part of the Indian Ocean (IO) has been a boiling cauldron due to the race of maritime hegemony, maritime alliances for economic cum security dimensions and choking important points of maritime trade in crisis. The outbreak of Covid heavily restricted global supply chains. Security cooperation should focus on 'reassurance' rather than 'deterrence' to create the desired security order in which multilateral frameworks may be formed. In this scenario, security interactions would help nation-states converge their national interests and minimize a zero-sum security situation. UNSC debate on maritime security demands for cooperative security approach through a framework of like-minded states. Pakistan foresees this debate as an increasing challenge by constructing the role of the Pakistan Navy to perform and ensure its capacities for maritime security in the long run. The paper presents the response to Indian Duplicities in the wake of the Russian proposal for maritime security management at UNSC in 2021. Strategic analysis

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with qualitative research method and exploratory approach is adopted in this research with pertinent and feasible findings.

Keywords: Deterrence, India, Indian Ocean, Maritime Security, Russia, UNSC.

Introduction

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) headed by India in August 2021, titled “Enhancing Maritime Security: A Case for International Cooperation”, presided over by Indian Premier Narendra Modi. During the session, a resolution on maritime security was passed emphasizing much-needed balance in the contours of geostrategic dimensions evolving new world order after every international happening, i.e., the Russia-Ukraine war, international oil prices hype and many others. This session focused on the urgency of addressing maritime challenges with the idea of multilateral cooperation and governance transparency in light of the UNUN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – 1982. After this resolution, Russia intended to launch another initiative to be maritime security management in the Indian Ocean, which is altogether out of its jurisdiction. But support for the Indian narrative created regional tensions and pinched Pakistan to respond in a very calculated manner. Why? Because new alliances call for reconsideration of the regional security complex and strategic plan to perform in Arabian waters, countering a navy that intends to be a 'Net Security Provider' in the Indian Ocean region. This argument is weakened as one of the strategic allies of India – The USA, didn't support it anywhere. This situation in UNSC demands a planned response to the UNSC debate. In the upcoming discussion on Indian duplicities, the Russian proposal of maritime security in light of the war of principles is discussed in detail with plausible recommendations.

Indian Duplicities

Indian aim of 'Removing Barriers to Maritime Trade' and Impeding Pakistan's Entry into IORA

Pakistan being an important littoral state of IOR, is eligible to become a member of IORA as per clause 4(a) of the IORA charter. However, India has time and again blocked the rightful entry of Pakistan into IORA on the pretext of not granting 'Most Favored Nation' (MFN) status to India.² Even though the charter itself states that bilateral issues impeding regional cooperation may be kept aside from deliberations as per clause 2(d), India continues to discriminate against Pakistan by blocking its rightful entry. If the IORA charter is to be followed in letter and spirit, then India stands in violation of clause 2(a), which calls for "respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful coexistence."³

If India wants to remove barriers to maritime trade in the region, it should stop sabotaging CPEC, which has the potential to increase maritime trade through Gwadar port. According to a dossier submitted by Pakistan to UN, Indian credentials of being a promoter of peace and regional trade have been largely exposed. The arrest of Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, the creation of a state-sponsored militia of 700 militants under RAW and the patronization of Baloch separatists speak volumes about Indian designs against CPEC.⁴ RAW and Indian PM Narendra Modi have developed a \$500 million Anti-CPEC Cell to

² Devirupa Mitra, "Faraway France Enters Indian Ocean Rim Association as India Backs Move, Iran Eases Off," *The Wire*, Dec 18, 2020, <https://thewire.in/external-affairs/indian-ocean-rim-association-iora-france-india-iran>.

³ "Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association," accessed Nov 07, 2021, https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/70/docs/iora_charter.pdf.

⁴ Naveed Siddiqui, "Irrefutable Evidence: Dossier on India's Sponsorship of State Terrorism in Pakistan Presented," *Dawn*, Nov 14, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1590333>.

undermine CPEC developments.⁵ It is pertinent to mention that China has offered India to become a part of BRI. But India continues to oppose BRI and CPEC, thus, creating barriers to regional maritime trade.

Brussels-based 'EU DisinfoLab' revealed in 2020 a network of 265 coordinated fake local media outlets in 65 countries favoring Indian interests, as well as various questionable think tanks and NGOs. The report said the operation's long-term goals were to push material against Pakistan and China and strengthen India's position at international venues, including the EU and UN, since 2005.⁶ It proves that India promotes barriers to regional and maritime trade through its nefarious designs, as mentioned above.

Consistent Intrusion by Indian Fishing Vessels in Pakistan's Waters and the Spread of Marine Pollution

Indian fishing boats engage in 'Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing' (IUUF) in neighboring states' waterways. Part VII of UNCLOS-82 focuses on high-seas conservation and management. Articles 116, 117, 118, 119, and 120 of UNCLOS-82 provide a framework for the rights of fishing and sustainable utilization of marine organic resources.⁷ The articles prohibit IUUF in high seas as well as in neighboring waters.

The IUUF is also a major hurdle in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG-14), established by the United Nations in 2015. SDG-14 deals with the conservation of life below water. Target IV

⁵ "RAW Running \$500 Million Cell to Sabotage CPEC, Says Gen Zubair Hayat," *Dawn*, Nov 14, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1370463>.

⁶ Bilal Kuchay, "EU NGO Report Uncovers Indian Disinformation Campaign," *Al-Jazeera*, Dec 11, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/11/eu-ngo-report-uncovers-a-15-year-disinformation-campaign>.

⁷ "United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea," *UNUN*, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

of SDG-14 urges the ending of overfishing, IUUF and destructive fishing practices to replenish fish populations quickly.⁸ Instead of facilitating the accomplishment of SDGs, India is inhibiting the overall progress.

Several measures have been crafted to undermine the illicit usage of marine resources. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission 17th IOTC Session approved Resolutions 13/02, 13/03, 13/06, and 13/07. (Mauritius, 6–10 May 2013).⁹ These resolutions deal with the registration of fishing vessels, the keeping of fishing records, and securing of endangered species. India has refused to comply with all resolutions mentioned above.¹⁰ and continues to exploit the neighboring maritime resources without following the recommended safeguards.

The Indian fishery threatens the marine environment in three distinct ways. First, Indian fishermen are consistently involved in marine poaching by employing harmful fishing techniques within Pakistan's territorial waters.¹¹ The Indian illicit fishery in Pakistan's waters has caused a total revenue loss of Rs. 2 billion per month.¹² Second, excessive Indian fishing, even in closed seasons, has threatened the existence of several marine species. Indian Ocean accounts for over 14% of global fish caught, but about 30% of assessed stocks in the region have

⁸ "International Day for Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing," *United Nations*, accessed on Nov 05, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-illegal-fishing-day>

⁹ "Indian Ocean Tuna Commission", accessed on Nov 05, 2021, <https://www.iotc.org/documents/objection-india-iotc-resolutions-1302-1303-1306-and-1307>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Pakistan arrests 59 Indian Fishermen for poaching in the country waters," *First post*, accessed on Nov 05, 2021, <http://www.firstpost.com/world/pakistan-arrests-59-indian-fishermen-for-poaching-in-the-countrys-waters-2706882.html>.

¹² Lt Cdr Tahir Majeed Asim, "Improving Health of Fishing Industry to Revive Country's Blue Economy," *The Beacon* (2017 -2018): 09.

already been fished beyond sustainable limits.¹³ Third, the plastic footprint - particularly fishing nets - of Indian fishermen is a lethal concern for marine life.¹⁴ These three factors play a primary role in distorting the fragile balance of marine ecology in the regional waters. India has failed to implement environment-friendly safeguards within its fishery industry.

The majority of IUUF takes place in the proximity of the disputed Indo-Pak maritime boundary. Denying a peaceful resolution of the Sir Creek issue, India continues to violate UNCLOS-82 section II article 118, which encourages state collaboration in maritime conservation and management.¹⁵ The existence of well-defined borders and the implementation of law and order are crucial for thwarting IUUF.

India maintains an opaque posture as far as the safety and management of its nuclear materials are concerned. The radiation poisoning of the Subarnarekha River exemplifies how irresponsible mining of uranium deposits at Jaduguda in Jharkand state has endangered the corresponding areas.¹⁶ Similarly, the Madras Atomic

¹³ "Unregulated Fishing on the high seas of the Indian Ocean," *WWF*, Nov 02, 2020, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?1014116/Unregulated-fishing-on-the-high-seas-of-the-Indian-Ocean & Pooja Bhatt, 'IUU Fishing as a National Security Threat:

Revisiting India's Domestic Framework and Compliance with International Regimes', *US Naval War College Review*, 2020, [https://digital-](https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2928&context=ils)

[commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2928&context=ils](https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2928&context=ils)

¹⁴ "Haunting our seas: How ghost nets threaten marine life and human beings," *Times of India*, Jul 04, 2021, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/haunting-our-seas-how-ghost-nets-threaten-marine-life-and-human-beings/articleshow/84686016.cms>.

¹⁵ "United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea," *UNUN*, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

¹⁶ "Leaking Jaduguda mine poses Radioactive risks: USUS Report," *The Times of India*, Dec 15, 2015, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/leaking-jaduguda-mine-poses-radioactive-risk-us-report/articleshow/50178791.cms>.

Power Station (MAPS) located at Kalpakkam has been upgraded by raising new fast breeder reactors. Besides inherent safety concerns, coastal nuclear power plants are also vulnerable to natural disasters. While the developed nations with better safety protocols are moving away from such approaches, India is still building nuclear infrastructure in the coastal regions, thus raising the likelihood of environmental disasters.

The accidents within the Indian Navy involving nuclear assets also have the potential to cause ecological calamity. *INS Arihant (SSBN)*, the only operational nuclear ballistic missile submarine of the Indian Navy, was reportedly left crippled when it dived without closing all its hatches.¹⁷ The submarine, equipped with nuclear weapons and power plants, remained out of action for 10 months. The track record of questionable safety and maintenance standards of the Indian Navy suggests that the occurrence of similar incidents cannot be ruled out in the future.

India is the 12th major marine polluter and will likely be the 5th by 2025.¹⁸ The coastal regions of India alone produce around 33215 MLD of sewage, while the sewage treatment capacity is a mere 12673 MLD.¹⁹ The remaining untreated sewage waste ends up in seawater after

¹⁷ Dinakar Peri and Josy Joseph, 'INS Arihant left crippled after 'accident' 10 months ago, World Defense, Jan 08 2018, <https://world-defense.com/threads/ins-arihant-left-crippled-after-%E2%80%98accident%E2%80%99-10-months-ago.4981/>

¹⁸ "Are we at sea on Marine Plastic Pollution?" *Financial Express*, Nov 11, 2020, accessed on Nov 05, 2021, <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/are-we-at-sea-on-marine-plastic-pollution/2125852/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20India%20is%20considered%20the,the%20fifth%2Dlargest%20by%202025.&text=The%20global%20Marine%20plastic%20Pollution,into%20the%20ocean%20every%20minute.>

¹⁹ "India sewage treatment plants treat only a third of the sewage generated daily: CPCB," *Down To Earth*, Sep 22, 2021, accessed on Nov 05, 2021, [https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/india-s-sewage-treatment-plants-treat-only-a-third-of-the-sewage-generated-daily-cpcb-79157.](https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/india-s-sewage-treatment-plants-treat-only-a-third-of-the-sewage-generated-daily-cpcb-79157)

moving through rivers, and canals and contributes momentarily to marine pollution. By doing so, India violates articles 221 and 222 of UNCLOS-82 section VI, which directs to avoid pollution arising from marine sources and countering pollution from aerial and seaborne navigation in the maritime domain.²⁰

All initiatives about the conservation of the maritime environment by controlling marine pollution should be welcomed by Pakistan. However, the feasibility of such initiatives is determined by the legal framework and working principles. The facts mentioned above suggest that India is a poor choice for framing any working principles for overcoming marine pollution and conserving marine ecology.

Indian Hegemony in IO Under the Guise of Net Security Provider

Indian Prime Minister Modi - rotational president of UNSC (August 2021), stated in his presidential address that "Oceans may be our shared heritage and lifeline for international trade, but the sea has always proven to be dangerous and insecure".²¹ His statement has cautioned every state to protect its borders on its own while Oceans are shared developmental spaces, so they should be secured via a globally accepted body- under UN auspices. Part VII, Section-I, Articles 88 & 89 of UNCLOS-82 provisos reservation of high seas for peaceful purposes and invalidity of claims of sovereignty over the high seas, respectively, rebut the Indian

²⁰ "United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea," *UNUN*, accessed on Nov 05, 2021,

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

²¹ Viotti Maria Luiza Ribeiro, "Remarks at Security Council high-level open debate on 'Enhancing Maritime Security: A case for international cooperation [as delivered]'", United Nations-SG, Aug 09, 2021, Available at:

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/remarks-security-council-high-level-open-debate-%E2%80%98enhancing-maritime-security-case-for-international-cooperation%E2%80%99-delivered>

role of the net security provider.²² As in general, smaller littoral states would like to get security provisions from some hired policeman but those having a strong naval presence in IO would not welcome the same notion.²³

India is a signatory of UN Security Council Resolution 1929 (2010), which reaffirms participants' commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supports the efforts of the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG).²⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540²⁵ and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM)-1987, which made it binding on states to ensure stringent measures to prevent nuclear material from falling into the wrong hands.²⁶ About face, the theft of over 200 kilograms of nuclear material during the last two decades (1994-2021) in India poses serious threats of nuclear terrorism, necessitating the global powers' role to enforce safety

²² UNCLOS-82, Part-VII, Section-I, Article 88 and 89, Available at:

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

²³ Venter Denis, "India and Africa: Maritime Security and India's Strategic Interests in the Western Indian Ocean", Centro de Estudos Internacionais, pp 131-167, 2017, Available at: <https://books.openedition.org/cei/469?lang=en>

²⁴ UNSC Resolution-1929, "Reaffirmation on the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", United Nations Security Council, 2010, Available at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1929\(2010\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1929(2010))

²⁵ UNSC Resolution-1540, "Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", United Nations Security Council, 2004, Available at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1540\(2004\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1540(2004))

²⁶ IAEA, "Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment", Feb 08 1987, Available at: <https://www.iaea.org/publications/documents/conventions/convention-physical-protection-nuclear-material-and-its-amendment>

standards in the country.²⁷ This situation raises the question about India's claim of being a 'Net Security Provider'.

Understanding of the Indian claim has to be improved regarding 'Net Security Provider, i.e., Provider of 'Net Security' or 'Net provider' of security in the Indian Ocean. The statement is binate, giving options of international policing or taking up the status of the regional maritime hegemon. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a UNSC address on Aug 09, 2021, states in this reference that we need to establish a more effective counteraction to transnational crime and prevent the use of seas and oceans for criminal purposes²⁸. While ensuring security, we need to respect the sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and resolution of disputes by way of dialogue. So, the status of the Net Security Provider could not be decided alone.

The dual methodology proposed in chapter 2 of IMSS-2015 to both secure the chokepoints and gain command of the sea, is the important maritime strategic orientation of India.²⁹ Chapter 6 of the IMSS-2015 states that India's planning seems to envisage having command of the sea in the Indian Ocean with a sub-policy of controlling the identified chokepoints, handling maritime security operations and strategic communication.³⁰ While extended presence in Red Sea-Inlet to

²⁷ APP, "1994-2021: Over 200 kg uranium theft in India poses nuclear terrorism threats", Associated Press of Pakistan, Sep 04 2021, Available at: <https://www.app.com.pk/national/1994-2021-over-200kg-uranium-theft-in-india-poses-nuclear-terrorism-threats/>

²⁸ Novo-Ogaryo (Moscow region), "*Putin Speech at UNUN Security Council High-Level Debate on Maritime Security*", Aug 09 2021, Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/66352>

²⁹ Indian Maritime Security Strategy-2015, Chapter-2, Indian Navy Official Website. Available at: <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-maritime-security-strategy-2015>

³⁰ Indian Maritime Security Strategy-2015, Chapter-6, Indian Navy Official Website. Available at: <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-maritime-security-strategy-2015>

IO near strait of *Babl-e-Mandab*, Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and expanding area of operation by recognizing new chokepoints- the Mozambique Channel, Ombai and Wetar Straits may create maritime rifts in the region (IMSS-2015, Table 2.1).³¹

QUAD's upgradation to QUAD 2.0 in military sector cooperation is raising the question of capacity justifications as high seas are not in anyone's jurisdiction and may pave the way for a power dilemma.³² In this context, the Indian move in mere madness to dominate IO by only relying on the US alliance is not enough. As yet, despite the US calling India a strategic partner but is continuously delaying India's role as a 'Net Security Provider' in the region by launching new maritime strategic agreements. An important aspect is that Beijing and Washington have a direct stake in the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and in regional stability more generally, including the peaceful resolution of disputes which wipe out the need for Indian claim of 'Net Security Provider'.³³

India needs to prove its capabilities for the claimed status, as during the COVID crisis, New Delhi could not counter the situation due to a lack of resources, capability and capacity.³⁴ Maritime security concerns involve interstate dimension, and unauthorized use of sea necessitates

³¹ Indian Maritime Security Strategy-2015, Chapter-2, Table 2.1, Indian Navy Official Website. Available At: <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-maritime-security-strategy-2015>

³² European Parliament, "The Quad: An emerging multilateral security framework of democracies in the Indo-Pacific region", Briefing-European Parliament Research Services, 2021, Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690513/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)690513_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690513/EPRS_BRI(2021)690513_EN.pdf)

³³ CRS Report, "U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, Oct 06 2021, Available at: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R42784.pdf>

³⁴ Markey S Daniel, "The Strategic Consequences of India's COVID-19 Crisis", *Council on Foreign Affairs*, Apr 28 2021, Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/strategic-consequences-indias-covid-19-crisis>

security provision service. India established information fusion centres (IFC) in 2019 as a vital spot to accomplish the claim of net security Providers.³⁵ IFC - IOR, with installed coastal radar surveillance systems across friendly nations by India. Information collating and processing is a small yet crucial step for materializing the concept of Net Security Provider, while it needs to be evaluated at Tallin Manual 3.0 on cyber operations.³⁶ It further needs strategic acceptance in IOR for its commercial viability. UNCLOS-82 is void of any chapter dedicatedly to dealing with cyber security, information sharing and gathering, which needs to be considered a priority for updating the law.³⁷

From another lens, as discussed already, Pakistan has actively fulfilled its commitments related to maritime security. Every littoral state manages its water's security and protects SLOCs passing through it. Therefore, the Indian claim will not be acceptable to all stakeholders of IO and Pakistan in particular.

Peaceful Resolution of Maritime Dispute as per International Law

India emphasized on peaceful resolution of maritime disputes at the UNSC debate. However, the mantra for promoting amicable resolution of conflicts is eyewash. Firstly, India failed every time to resolve its domestic issues peacefully, like the ethnic disputes that are prevailing for decades in different regions, i.e., Assam, Nagaland and the issue of Khalistan with Sikh etc. India as a state completely failed to settle those issues according to law peacefully.

³⁵ CSIS report, "Ports and Partnerships: Delhi Invest in Indian Ocean Leadership", Center for Strategic & International Studies, Dec 05 201, Available at: <https://amti.csis.org/ports-and-partnerships-delhi-invests-in-indian-ocean-leadership/>

³⁶ CCDCOE, "The Tallinn Manual 3.0", *Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, 2017, Available at: <https://ccdcoe.org/research/tallinn-manual/>

³⁷ UNCLOS-82, Available at:

https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

Secondly, not only domestically but even internationally, India never showed peaceful and mature behavior in dealing with its disputes with neighboring states. Shiv Shankar Menon, a former diplomat of India, stated in one of his lectures that India has violated borders with all of its neighboring countries. India currently has severe disputes with China on Ladakh and Nepal on Kalapani and Susta Territory. Above all, the major disputes are with Pakistan, including Kashmir, the water, and the Sir Creek issue.

Pakistan offered peaceful resolutions according to international law, but every time but these offers were rejected singlehandedly by India. India played a major role in making the Kashmir dispute more intense by trespassing some important international laws, including;

UNSC Resolution 47 calls for a free and impartial plebiscite in Kashmir, but India becomes a hurdle every time to carries out a free plebiscite.³⁸

Article 33 (1) of the Shimla agreement 1972 stated that all matters of Kashmir should be dealt with bilaterally.³⁹ India has always taken unilateral choices for Jammu and Kashmir, as shown by the repeal of Articles 370 and 35A, which violate UN resolutions and the Shimla Agreement.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Chapter 8, 'Special rules on occupied territories' states that any type of forceful annexation and occupation is an infringement of international law.⁴⁰ The Indian

³⁸UNSCRresolution-47, "*Restoration of peace and order and the plebiscite in the State of Jammu and Kashmir*", United Nations Security Council Resolutions, assessed date Nov 09, 2021, Available at: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/47>

³⁹Simla Agreement, Article-33. "*India-Pakistan: Joint Statement on Implementation of the Simla Agreement*" International Legal Materials 11, no. 5 (1972): pp. 958-962, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020782900038559>.

⁴⁰ IHL-1948, Chapter-8, "Special rules on occupied territories", 1948, Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/hrhandbooken.pdf>

occupation of Kashmir epitomizes the same situation as referred in IHL – Chapter 8.

Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention 1949 provides that an occupying authority cannot expel or transfer locals into occupied territory. India violated its constitution by repealing articles 370 and 35A.

On the Sir Creek issue, India is violating the 1192 resolution and its map-44 which was agreed between two provinces, i.e., among Rann of Kutch and Sindh, of the Indian sub-continent in 1924.⁴¹ India and Pakistan have different interpretations of the doctrine of international law, 'uti possidetis juris', which creates a commotion. According to this doctrine, newly independent states inherit their boundaries.

According to this principle of international law, the entirety of Sir Creek belonged to the Government of Sindh before independence. Therefore, the Sir Creek region belongs to the Pakistani province of Sindh today. India, conversely, claims that Sir Creek should have to be dealt with according to the 'thalweg principle of International Law'- demarcation from the middle line of non-navigable waters, thus as the boundary belonged to the Rann of Kutch. Resultantly, according to Indian claim, the Province of Gujarat owns the territory as it succeeded the Kutch Darbar.

Moreover, India has also made a water dispute worse with Pakistan by violating the Indus Water Treaty of 1960⁴², causing tensions across the border. India is irresponsible in dealing with its disputes with other adjacent states, such as China which is evident from the recent Ladakh episode of 2020. Thus, it is clearly evident that India's proposal of the

⁴¹ Sikander A, Shah, "River Boundary Delimitation and the Resolution of the Sir creek dispute between Pakistan and India", 2008, Available at:

<https://lawreview.vermontlaw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/shah.pdf>

⁴² David Gilmartin, "The Indus Waters Treaty and Its Afterlives," May 2015, pp. 220-252, <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520285293.003.0007>

peaceful resolution of maritime disputes under international law is contradictory to its claims, as mentioned above. In pursuance of this, a Russian proposal at UNSC on Aug 09, 2021 was presented, which aims to participate in managing the security situation in IOR. Important features of this proposal are discussed.

Salient Features of the Russian Proposal at UNSC

Russia presented a few important features in the UNSC session in August 2021, which could have long last implications for Pakistan and the region at large if other states as a factor play their role as part in regional security management. The following are important features of the Russian proposal at UNSC.

- Need to evaluate practical problems connected to countering "21st-century piracy by building a more effective transnational criminal countermeasure.
- Uniting all stakeholders, international organizations, and regional groupings under the UN and Security Council.
- Adhering to UN principles for peaceful and responsible use of maritime areas, natural resources, environmental preservation, and sustainable economic activity.
- Cooperating with the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Commission.
- Creating a UN institution to tackle marine crime in different areas.

This particular framework includes specialists, civil society members, researchers, and commercial firms.

Russian Proposal in UNSC: Analysis and Implications

Russian proposal in UNSC to establish a dedicated body within UN for dealing with maritime crimes first requires analyzing its intent of it vis-à-vis the Indian Ocean region (IOR). Russia considers India and the Indian

Ocean important as per the following clauses of the Russian Maritime Doctrine:

Clause 68: National Maritime Policy in the Indian Ocean area prioritizes cordial ties with India.⁴³

Clause 69: Strengthening maritime security via a forward naval presence and excellent relations with regional governments.⁴⁴

In this way, Russia's rising interest in the IOR seems to be motivated by a desire to secure a long-term presence in a strategically vital and profitable portion of the globe. Also, Russia considers Narcos trade a major security threat. Makran Coast has been considered as the source. The milieu suits well with India and, in effect, will result in the unwarranted presence of naval ships too close to Pakistan's coast. Also, Russia has also been trying to become a dialogue partner in Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). However, its application could not find consensus owing to its opposition by Australia, South Africa and Iran.⁴⁵

The Russian proposal to establish a dedicated body which is tacitly in line with the pronouncements made by PM Modi in the UNSC speech. It is deemed as a gesture to earn the goodwill of India (which is the most important goal of Russian National Maritime Policy in IOR as per Clause 68 of the Russian Maritime Doctrine (RMD). RMD calls for friendly relations with India to present itself as a responsible and concerned

⁴³ "Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation," accessed Nov 07, 2021, https://dnnlgwick.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/NWCDepartments/Russia%20Maritime%20Studies%20Institute/Maritime%20Doctrine%20TransENGrus_FINAL.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=fqZgUUVRVrRkMsfNMOj%2FNaRNawUoRdhvFj7%2FpAkM%3D.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Russia to Continue Attempt to Be IORA Dialogue Partner, 'Depends' on Support from India," *The Wire*, Dec 21, 2020, <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/russia-bid-iora-partner-india>.

player in IOR. However, the Russian proposal is quite embryonic. It has not mentioned the modalities and functionality of such a body.

Strategic partnership between Russia and India consists of multipronged cooperation in politics, trade and economy, defence, Science and technology, culture and other fields as stated in 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership between India and Russia' in 2000.⁴⁶ Both states wish to prevent regional dominance and maintain free commerce. Indian PM: "Both nations share mutual interests in terrorism, Afghanistan, and Asia-Pacific." Delhi and Moscow endorsed regional security architecture based on the non-bloc concept of open, egalitarian, and common security.⁴⁷

After Indo-US strategic partnership (COMCASA, LEMOA and BECA etc.), Indo-Russian relations experience a declining trend. As India is aligning more towards the West, to balance this act, Russia engaged with Pakistan and extended its cooperation in the defence and energy sector. A common irritant between Indo-Russian relations is the factor of China and Pakistan. Russia and China share a broader strategic alignment against the US in the Asia Pacific and are working together to counter US influence and containment. On the other hand, India is a key stratagem in US anti-China policy in Asia-Pacific, thus creating a divergence in Indo-Russian relations.

It is pertinent to mention that if the Russian proposal to establish a dedicated maritime body within the UNUN gets passed and approved by member states at the UN, and it will not go against Pakistan's maritime interests since Pakistan is also actively engaged in fighting maritime crimes through various initiatives independently or in collaboration. RMSP, Aman exercise and CTF 150,151 are some of them. The Russian proposal did not put India in an advantageous position in the maritime domain, which was the biggest concern for Pakistan. Rather, it calls

⁴⁶ "Declaration on Strategic Partnership between Republic of India and the Russian Federation," *Ministry of External Affairs*, Government of India, last modified Oct 03, 2000, <https://mea.gov.in/Images/pdf/DeclarationStrategicPartnership.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

for uniting the power potential of all the interested countries' special services and corresponding troops under the auspices of the UN. Increased Russian influence in IOR would benefit Pakistan in the future. Russian naval presence might act as a counterweight to the continued US role in IOR, which is also beneficial to Chinese interests in IOR. However, Russian involvement in IOR would be difficult to materialize, considering the US is the major stakeholder and player in IOR and UN.

As far as China is concerned, the international and regional strategic cooperation between China and Russia starts from and is based on the Eurasian continent. The major bilateral cooperation projects, such as the SCO, the connection between OBOR and the EEU and the Greater Eurasia Partnership. China and Russia have conducted cooperation related to oceans, including the Arctic cooperation, the building of the Maritime Silk Road, joint military exercises in the Pacific, India, the Atlantic Ocean, the joint aircraft cruising in the Sea of Japan, etc.⁴⁸ China and Russia have the conditions and possibility to form a strategic maritime partnership. They have overlapping interests in the maritime area; maybe there could be contradictions in some issues, but no serious conflicting interests. Politically, the two states maintain high-level relations, which serve as the necessary political foundation. Both China and Russia regard maritime development as an important strategic direction.

Also, China and Russia are already enhancing their navy-to-navy cooperation through various exercises in IOR (Exercise Mosi and Exercise Marine Security Belt).⁴⁹ China and Russia may be slow in enhancing their strategic coordination in the Indian Ocean, but the intent is there. Keeping in view the above realities, it can be inferred that China would

⁴⁸ Zhao Huasheng, "China-Russia Strategic Partnership: From Continental to Marine," *Russian Council*, Aug 09, 2021, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/china-russian-strategic-partnership-from-continental-to-marine/>.

⁴⁹ Oriana Skylar Mastro, Russia and China Team Up on the Indian Ocean," *The Interpreter*, Dec 16, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/russia-and-china-team-indian-ocean>.

not create a hurdle towards the Russian proposal. However, China has not yet taken any official stance on the Russian proposal. Moreover, there is now a greater inclination in Pakistan's foreign policy to establish better ties with Russia. It is needless to mention that Russia participated in the Aman exercise 2021, which shows its greater resolve to engage with IOR littoral states as per its National Maritime Doctrine. Pakistan and China must collectively strategize to reap maximum benefits from this proposal. Proposing such a proposal might earn Pakistan a bad reputation in the UN and Kremlin, which India will further propagate on various forums. Hence, Pakistan should actively support the Russian proposal to gain diplomatic and political mileage from it. Last but not least, establishing a new body within the UNUN will have to be approved by UNGA and UNSC, which is easier said than done.

Conclusion

The Indo-Russian proposal, so far, has received no credible response from the International Community. The emerging complications in the maritime domain, particularly in the Indian Ocean region, dictate that the formation of a new and dedicated security framework is not a practical idea without the participation of all stakeholders of the Indian Ocean region. For countering asymmetric and low-intensity threats, several multilateral bodies are already operational. In addition, the nature of threats is not acute enough to compel all major stakeholders to unify under a mutually agreed framework, as this proposal was intended to counter maritime developments that are not in India and Russia's very interest.

In principle, the suggestions made via this proposal align with the national maritime interests of Pakistan. On diplomatic grounds, Pakistan should welcome such initiatives. However, Islamabad will avoid any tangible initiative till a credible framework will not be put forward, and the stance of its close allies will not become clear. The defining factor of such initiatives is the methodology, not the goals, as per which they are

implemented. The credibility of the proponents - as far as this proposal is concerned - is dubious. The active involvement of India in crafting and projecting this proposition casts implausibility as far as China and Pakistan are concerned. While propositions made by New Delhi regarding maritime connectivity, marine resource management, peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, and its actions on the ground are contradictory in nature. Subsequent to it, the Indian political thought process is increasingly centered on the self-proclaimed notion of India being a net security provider. Under these circumstances, any proposal put forward by India will be viewed from a political perspective and, therefore, will have questionable credibility. There is a good possibility that enhancing the Sino-Russian naval relationship might yield a reworked proposal which will have better acceptability among major stakeholders.

In light of the discussion made in three important dimensions of Indian duplicities and the Russian proposal for maritime security at UNSC, the following are plausible recommendations to take up as a response plan towards maritime security management proposals discussed at the UNSC session in August 2021.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) should actively project the issue of Sir Creek at the international forums. Similarly, Pakistan must take other regional maritime nations onboard to raise concerns about Indian violations of maritime boundaries. (Section (e), Para 22).

Pakistan should augment its maritime security capabilities to extend influence in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The enforcement of law & order in the maritime domain can deter IUUF and similar non-traditional threats from the Indian side. (Section (b), Para 7, 9, 10, 11).

Being a committed member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, Pakistan must encourage its regulation of the fishery industry. The

Automatic Identification System (AIS) can be standardized under directions from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MoMA) in the fishing industry to achieve better management. (Section (b), Para 4, 5, 6, 7).

MOFA must raise concerns about the transparency of Indian nuclear material management. The international community should ensure secure treatment of radioactive wastage in India as per IAEA recommendations. (Section (b), Para 9, 10).

MOFA should persuade the international community to realize the potential ecological risks involved in the nuclear proliferation ambitions of New Delhi. The growing number of nuclear-armed submarines in the Indian Ocean will also subsequently increase the likelihood of nuclear accidents, which can lead to radioactive contamination of the marine environment. (Section (b), Para 9, 10).

UNCLOS-82 is void of any dedicated chapter regarding cyber operation and security law which needs to be incorporated as a priority for maintaining international cyber order. (Section (c), Para 18).

Pakistan can expand strategic maritime relations with littoral states by increasing the area of operation of JMICC and dedicated cyber operation section for sharing and gathering information on preferred and mutually accepted domains under directions from MOFA and MOMA. (Section (c), Para 18).

MOFA should make an effort to be the participant/observer state of ASEAN and IORA to expand its international maritime presence. (Section (a), Para 1).

MOFA may attract littoral states for a collective security framework which can be crafted focusing on mutual cooperation for securing seas instead of imposing a self-proclaimed 'net security provider' agenda. (Section (c), Para 14, 15, 19).

Emerging Challenges to Deterrence Stability in South Asia: A Theoretical Analysis

Dr. Nasreen Akhtar¹

Abstract

The nuclear deterrent and conventional capabilities of both Pakistan and India contribute extensively towards maintaining peace and strategic stability in the region. In South Asia, both states have significantly increased their nuclear and conventional capabilities. The recent new trends, at regional as well as global levels, such as growing conventional asymmetry, changing policies of the non-proliferation regime, and the introduction of more sophisticated weapon capabilities pose a direct pernicious challenge to deterrence stability of Pakistan and India - as both nuclear states are immensely increasing their defence system. Through the lens of structural deterrence theory, this paper examines the strategic threats posed to deterrence stability in South Asia. Complete deterrence has become a mirage in South Asia. This paper examines the strategic imbalance in South Asia as the most pertinent threat - the two nuclear adversaries, India and Pakistan, are accumulating military power. This paper argues that strategic imbalance has serious implications for the South Asian region. In this paper, we employ the interpretative methodology.

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Keywords: Deterrence, stability, trends, conventional, weapons, nuclear, South Asia, India, Pakistan.

Introduction

South Asia is considered a dangerous region where two nuclear states, India and Pakistan, are the rival states. Therefore, maintaining peace and security depends on nuclear deterrence and “strategic stability”. The most considered modes of strategic postures are; deterrence, defence, offense and compellence, whereas defensive deterrence is denied and offensive deterrence is practiced by punishment.² Crisis stability is a quality of strategic relations during a period of acute crisis between strategic competitors where they feel that the exaggeration of a crisis is not advantageous in the interest of either side due to “technical malfunction” India’s weapon system has alarmed the regional security posture.³ In the prevailing strategic environment of the South Asian region, strategic stability remains under constant threat because of historic animosity, mistrust, terrorism and extremism.

The fragile security environment between India and Pakistan is marked by a list of long-standing border skirmishes, perpetual arms race, conventional asymmetry, territorial disputes and terrorism, which carries an inherent risk of nuclear escalation. Even though nuclear weapons induced deterrence between India and Pakistan, deterrence capability still confronts challenges. This includes gradual doctrinal shifts that affect the policy of deterrence.⁴ Furthermore, challenges ranging

² Ahmad Ali, “What is the difference between ‘Defensive Offense’ and ‘Offensive Defence’? *Defence Studies and Analysis*, (March 2019)..

<https://idsa.in/askanexpert/defensive-offence-and-offensive-defence>.

³ “India Says it Accidentally Fired a Missile into Pakistan”, *Aljazeera*, March 1, 2022.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/11/asia/india-pakistan-missile-intl-hnk/index.html>.

⁴ Zafar Khan, “The Changing Contours of Minimum Deterrence in South Asia”, *Policy Perspective* 13, no.1 (2016).

from growing conventional asymmetry to advancement in technology seriously impinge upon deterrence stability. These challenges undermine the role of nuclear weapons and increase regional instability. This paper aims to evaluate these challenges and prioritize the most pertinent ones among them and seeks to address them using a regional-centric nuclear deterrence theoretical approach. This paper investigates how far strategic imbalance in South Asia has exacerbated the threat to stability. How are emerging challenges compelling India and Pakistan to reinforce their defence system?

Contending Dilemma in South Asia: Diverse Narratives and Doctrinal Mismatch

Theoretically, deterrence stability is an abstract concept as; there exists no substantial apparatus to measure what strategies would be adequate to continue deterrence stability or maintain the requisite balance of power. Mostly debate about 'deterrence' is based on a belief that makes it difficult to achieve *in a hybrid technological and competitive political world*. Kenneth Waltz claims that "nuclear states dissuade from going to war". The United States and the [erstwhile] USSR avoided direct confrontation owing to their nuclear arsenals. However, the balance of power underscores that states act as unitary actors, and self-preservation is their main goal at a minimum level.⁵ whereas power maximization and aspiring for global hegemony come later.⁶

The concept of deterrence stability can be better understood by employing structural deterrence theory in the South Asian context. Structural deterrence theory argues that the status quo between two nuclear rivals could survive when deterrence is stable, and the cost of war is high, whereas conflict and war are more likely to occur when the

⁵ K.N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

⁶ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton &Company, 2001).

deterrence relationship is unstable.⁷ It highlights that the strategic balance will reduce the probability of war, while in asymmetric situations, the probability of war would be high.

The asymmetry of conventional capability increased with the Indian's test of nuclear weapons which was responded to by Pakistan's explicit nuclear tests in 1998.⁸ India and Pakistan continue a posture of "credible minimum deterrence". India has doctrinal ambiguity. There is a grave divergence between India's declared posture and its operational posture as India continues to develop all kinds of weapons to respond or conduct surgical strikes against Pakistan.⁹

The doctrine of credible and minim 'deterrence' remains contradictory with each other. This indicates that India's political and military leadership is moving on different routes. The post-Palwama and Balakot incidents categorically revealed India's motives regarding its "No First Use of Nuclear" policy. Indian Defence minister, Rajnath, exposed the Indian nuclear policy by saying that "India can review its "No First Use of Nuclear Policy."¹⁰ There is an ambiguity in the strategic areas of India regarding the purpose of nuclear or conventional weapons. The Ladakh incident,¹¹ with China has laid bare how India's military and political leaders act amid the crisis.¹² Indian military and the political leadership agreed with China to disengage the troops—The crisis has

⁷ Frank C. Zagare, D. Marc Kilgour, *Perfect Deterrence*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸ Abdullah Jilani, "Strategic Stability in South Asia", *Strategic Foresight for Asia*, (November 20, 2019):2,<https://strafasia.com/strategic-stability-in-south-asia/>.

⁹ Tony Dalton and G. Perkovich, "India's Nuclear Options and Escalation Dominance", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 19, 2016.

¹⁰ India Today, August 16, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-no-first-use-nuclear-policy-may-change-rajnath-singh-1581403-2019-08-16>.

¹¹ In May 2020, China and Indian forces fought at Ladakh over a disputed territory—The actual Line Of Control. This war lasted till February 2021.

¹² Sushant Singh, "Why China is Winning Against India", *Foreign Policy*, January 1, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/01/india-china-himalayas-ladakh-standoff/>.

posed a substantial challenge to India's long-term competition with China.¹³

The Technical Research Organization of India is also developing weaponry for unspecified threats. In 2013, the Indian Chief of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) revealed that India's Strategic Forces Command would have "anywhere-anytime ability".¹⁴ The Indian military leadership is unable to identify its principal adversary China or Pakistan against whom India is increasing its military capabilities, "Indian defence policy is dominated by an orthodox offensive doctrine".¹⁵ Indian National Security Advisor floated the idea of "offensive defence" doctrine in 2014¹⁶ that would augment instability in the South Asian region. This doctrinal mismatch generates incoherent signaling, which seriously undermines deterrence stability. At the same time, it could also compel regional actors such as China and Pakistan to take counteractive measures, which would result in instability. For a longer period, India has been trying to develop the capability to fight a two-front war with China and Pakistan. In this case, it has always viewed Pakistan as a weak link. That is why, it has an offensive posture against Pakistan while pursuing a defensive one against China. In this regard, its political and military leadership has made recurrent public statements.

It is imperative to maintain deterrence stability in the regional equation, – as it not only helps maintain a credible nuclear deterrent capability and strategic equilibrium- which is the only guarantee to

¹³ For detail, see "The crisis after the crisis: How Ladakh will shape India's competition with China", <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/crisis-after-crisis-how-ladakh-will-shape-india-s-competition-china>.

¹⁴ Aror. S, "New Chief of India Reveals Brave New Mandate", *India Today*, July 3, 2013. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/indias-nuclear-counterstrike-response-time-to-be-in-minutes-drdo-chief-169019-2013-07-03>.

¹⁵ Arzan, Tarapore, "Military Strategy: Rethink Doctrine or Risk Irrelevance", *Carnegie India*, August 10, 2020.

¹⁶ "When NSA Ajit Doval Outlined India's New Pak Strategy –Defensive Offence- Perfectly", *The Times of India* October 4, 2016.

guarantee peace and stability and war avoidance in the turbulent region. While other contours of strategic stability are potentially weak, and there is no institutionalized mechanism for escalation control during crises in South Asia. Therefore, over-dependence on nuclear weapons will make deterrence more instable in South Asia.

Regional Warmongering Doctrine

In South Asia, it can be deduced that issues such as conventional asymmetry, arms race, modernization of space, new war-fighting doctrines and cross-border infiltrations, as well as asymmetric warfare, have deeply upset the strategic equilibrium in the region growing asymmetry have pushed the two nuclear rival states, India and Pakistan, to modernize their forces to achieve strategic deterrent but the rising military modernization and arms race can lead to an escalation in a grave crisis.

India has developed a doctrine intending to “counter-terrorism” originating from Pakistan.¹⁷ Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) continues at all levels of Indian defence infrastructure. Initially, the main aim of CSD was to launch punitive strikes against Pakistan- in case of any attack on Indian Territory.¹⁸ General Sharif categorically avowed that “Pakistan has the capability to deal with all kinds of Pakistan’s enemies and threats be it conventional or sub-conventional, cold start or hot start”. CSD would provide India with the advantage of decreased mobilization time and quick reaction time to achieve limited strategic objectives.¹⁹ The Indian credence to increase its hegemony under the nuclear umbrella has pushed Pakistan to develop NASR as a response to India’s missile

¹⁷ Moeed Yusuf. ‘Deterrence and Crisis Stability: Current Prognosis and Future Prospects, *Homeland Security Digital Library*, (2011)

¹⁸ MF, "What is India's Military Cold Start Military Doctrine? *The Economist*, January 31, 2017.. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/01/31/what-is-indias-cold-start-military-doctrine>.

¹⁹ Walter C. “Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army ‘s New Limited War Doctrine”, *International Security* 32, no.3 (Winter2007/2008):158-190.

system.²⁰ India also resolved to develop the short-range tactical ballistic missile Parahar. This addition of strategic and nuclear weapons in the arsenals by India and Pakistan in the region has increased the chances of using nuclear weapons during a crisis.

In 2004, the then Indian Army Chief, Krishnaswamy Sunderji, gave the concept of the new "limited war strategy" named Sundarji Doctrine, which was intended to address perceived shortcomings in the country's conventional war-fighting doctrine.²¹ As part of this doctrine, "eight Indian fighting groups would be prepared to conduct numerous attacks into Pakistan. The CSD intended to take advantage of Indian extensive, conventional military superiority to react rapidly against any Pakistani provocation. The Indian dilemma is how to translate conventional superiority into political benefit in a nuclear environment of almost parity.

Indian army (Integrated Battle Groups)-IBG, at the functioning level, would be combined in collaborating with Indian Air Force and Naval Aviation in order to offer the ground forces.²² No matter what time of day or night, all security actors would participate in continuous operations until their military objectives were met. It was the intent of Indian military operations to secure territory. General Rawat, the former Indian Army Chief, envisaged that "IBG would be used against Pakistan and China as well."²³ In fact, General Rawat officially revealed the hidden CSD in 2017.²⁴ Among CSD's several objectives were the potential to

²⁰ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Tactical Nuclear Weapon: Deterrence Stability between Indian and Pakistan", *Calhaun*, (2011).

[https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/69214/Tactical Nuclear Weapon Deterrence.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/69214/Tactical_Nuclear_Weapon_Deterrence.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

²¹ Walter. C.op.cit.

²² Franz-Stefan Gady, "Is the Indian Military Capable for Executing the Cold Start Doctrine? *The Diplomat*, January 29, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/is-the-indian-military-capable-of-executing-the-cold-start-doctrine/>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ M.F.op.cit.

rapidly mobilize air and ground forces to strike a crushing blow to the Pakistan Army, which is broadly professed by India but failed and "opted for subversive operation in Pakistan."²⁵

Increasing Conventional Asymmetry in South Asia: Revisiting Strategic Stability

For a clear understanding and prioritization of these challenges, it is imperative to comprehend the term "strategic stability" in a more fluid manner.²⁶ Strategic stability represents a strategic environment in which adversaries are certain that the use of power to change the existing security environment or balance of power to one's advantage is not a prudent strategy. Podvig states, "deterrence stability entails a situation in which states are equally deterred and confident that their adversaries lack the incentive to carry out a nuclear strike against them."²⁷ Cuba's missile crisis in 1962 is the best example of deterrence credibility between the two nuclear states. So far in South Asia, two nuclear states have not used their nuclear weapons knowing the consequences and effects of the use of nuclear weapons. Currently, nuclear deterrence is also compelling the regional states to increase their strategic weapons—both India and Pakistan are acquiring and developing arms technology.²⁸

Conventional asymmetry is at the heart of the deterrence equation in South Asia between India and Pakistan, and the region has become

²⁵ The Express Tribune, December 21, 2017.

²⁶ James Acton, "Reclaiming Strategic Stability", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 5, 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/02/05/reclaiming-strategic-stability-pub-51032>.

²⁷ Pavel Podvig, 'The Myth of Strategic Stability', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, October 31, 2012. <https://thebulletin.org/2012/10/the-myth-of-strategic-stability/#:~:text=Strategic%20stability%20is%20one%20of,nuclear%20abolitionists%20and%20nuclear%20hawks>

²⁸ Dimitri Trenin, "Strategic Stability in the Changing World", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, March 2019. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/3-15_Trenin_StrategicStability.pdf.

more insecure and perilous. India is purchasing weapons from Russia and France., the United States, Israel, and South Korea.²⁹ Globally, India stands in the fifth position regarding the size of its Naval forces, while Indian Air Forces stand in the fourth position in the world with 16 submarines and more than 250 aircraft carriers. India's military modernization over the last two decades has grown significantly and increased strategic imbalance in the region of South Asia vis a vis Pakistan.³⁰

Ongoing trends in the advancement of technology also enable India to have conventional military dominance. Due to "Pakistan's resources constraints, achieving conventional and nuclear parity with India remains a challenge as growing asymmetry in terms of quality and quantity compels Pakistan "to rely more on nuclear weapons."³¹ In response, Pakistan may increase the readiness of its nuclear arsenal.³² India is emerging as an important beneficiary as a result of its strategic partnership with the US consequently received strategic support from both President Trump and Joseph Biden.³³ Moreover, India successfully acquired S-400,³⁴ defence system from Russia despite the US criticism,³⁵

²⁹ Samrat Sharma, "How India Changed Preferences for Arms Supplies in 50 Years", *India Today*, March 17, 2021.

³⁰ Mansoor Ahmad, "Risk of Symmetry and Future Escalation in India-Pakistan Relations", *South Asian Voice*, May 29, 2020.

³¹ M. Naveed and Amjad Abbas, "Growing Reliance on Nuclear Tactical Weapons: A Case Study of the US, Russia and Pakistan", *Strategic Studies* 39, no 4 (2019): 42-53.

³² Micheal Krepon and Julia Thompson, *Deterrence Stability and Escalation Control in South Asia*, (Washington D.C.:The Stimson Center, 2013).

³³ "India-U.S.Relations", *Congressional Research Service*, (July 19, 2019):1. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46845.pdf>.

³⁴ "India Says Deliveries of S-400 Defence System Have Begun", *Aljazeera*, December 6, 2021.

³⁵ "US Discourages India from Acquiring Russian S-400 Missile Defence System", *The Hindu*, January 13, 2022.

but maintained its friendship with Russia and strengthened its strategic nexus.³⁶

The Indo-US Strategic partnership has proven highly beneficial to India- resulting in the Nuclear Deal between India and the US. Moreover, the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) 45 members granted a waiver to India.³⁷

India and the US have strengthened their strategic partnership for the last many years, particularly after the 9/11 incidents both countries have inked several security agreements since 2012. An agreement on the “Logistics Exchange Memorandum” was signed in 2016, and the Communications Cooperation and Security Agreement in 2018 further enhanced security collaboration between India and the US. Russia is also increasing India's arsenals for instance, the provision of Akula, a Nuclear-Powered Attack Submarine to India,³⁸ and a cooperative project for the Brahmos, Nuclear capable Supersonic Cruise Missile. These developments developed a perception that Indian technology operators do not have the expertise to control their advanced weapons, which may cause disaster in South Asia.³⁹

Rising Missile Defense System: Transformation of Deterrent Environment

The theoretical aspect of "deterrent" has been changed as technological advancement dominates the state's strategy. The existing deterrent

³⁶ Emily Tamkin, “Why India and Russia are Going to Stay Friends”, *Foreign Policy*, July 8, 2020.

³⁷ “Biden Reiterates US Support for India’s Entry Into NSG, Permanent Seat in UNSG”, *The Print*, September 25, 2021. <https://theprint.in/india/biden-reiterates-us-support-for-indias-entry-into-nsg-permanent-seat-in-unsq/740056/>.

³⁸ Manu Pubby, “India, Russia to Ink \$3 Billion on Nuclear Submarine Deal this Week”, *The Economic Times*, March 4, 2019.

³⁹ Faizan Fakhar. “BrahMos Misadventure: Accidental or Deliberate”, *The Tribune*, March 23, 2022.

environment in South Asia. Anand Sharma terms this race as “for India to achieve and maintain a continental status in near future, it needs to match or outdo adversary’s capabilities.”⁴⁰ India, in pursuit of its regional and global ambitions, has been actively working on its (Anti-Ballistic Missile) ABM programs.⁴¹ India has developed a two-tiered defence system, one for the higher altitude and the other for the lower altitude defence, it is keen to develop a multidimensional defence shield.⁴² These include the Prithvi Air Defence (PAD), a system to counter incoming ballistic missiles in the exo-atmosphere (80 km) and Advanced Air defence to counter ballistic missiles in its atmosphere.⁴³

These developments may put deterrence stability under tremendous pressure in the region and provide India with a considerable edge over Pakistan. Resultantly, Pakistan, threatened by these advancements, would need to accelerate its nuclear modernization programs and expand its deterrence capabilities. However, the practical effectiveness of BMD is still doubtful as it has never been used on the battlefield; however, it motivates India to launch pre-emptive, or what it now refers to as, surgical *strikes* against Pakistan. Such provocations or incitements would seriously undermine deterrence stability, forcing Pakistan to take serious remedial measures.

Furthermore, India’s nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine “INS Arihant” becoming operational.⁴⁴ It increases India’s ability to

⁴⁰ Anand Sharma, *Ballistic Missile Defence for India: Frontier of the 21st Century*, India: KW Publisher, 2013.

⁴¹ Frnaz-Stefan Gady, “Report: India’s Homemade Anti-Ballistic Missile Shield Ready”, *The Diplomat*, January 8, 2020.

⁴² Shaza Arif, “India’s Acquisition for the S-400 Air Defence System: Implications and Options for Pakistan”, *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, (Fall 2021): 40-54.

⁴³ Christoph Bluth, “India and Pakistan: A Case of Asymmetric Nuclear Deterrence”, *Korean Journal of Defence Analysis* 22, no.3 (2010):387-406.

⁴⁴ Zeba Siddiqui, “Factbox; India and Pakistan – nuclear arsenals and strategies”, *Reuters*, March 1, 2019.

launch a nuclear strike by air, land and sea, whereas Pakistan is developing its sea-launched cruise missiles to complete its own triad.⁴⁵ India's appetite for military modernization appears to have hardly decreased in recent years. It is spending billions of dollars on the acquisition of weapons. Moreover, it is leading as one of the world's major states that imports "military equipment" which includes the S-400s air defence systems.⁴⁶ Amongst the numerous factors that have compelled India to acquire this system, the first and foremost is its hegemonic aspirations of considering itself superior to the other regional neighbors,⁴⁷ exacerbated by this self-belief that it has the capability to wage a preemptive strike against its arch-rival Pakistan.⁴⁸ Many Indian policymakers, particularly under Modi's government, have been lured by Mearsheimer's concept of 'offensive Realism', which holds that the state should maximize its defence capability for itself and should compete to transform the balance of power. Mearsheimer argues that states suspect and distrust each other, which is why they will have perpetual competition and will endlessly accumulate power- that is "power to alter the world politics".⁴⁹

India is struggling to become the most powerful state in the South Asian region. It has risen as a substantial power, except Pakistan, no other South Asian country could stand as a challenger to India's size and position, because they are small states and will never have a strength to challenge a regional hegemon in terms of the military power. There are specific criteria that must be met to qualify as a great power, and one of these is military might. India believes that such cutting-edge weaponry will be vital in ordaining its status as a strong military force and this

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jon Grevatt. Op.cit

⁴⁷ John Mearsheimer. Op.cit.

⁴⁸ "India may use nuclear option first to pre-empt attack: expert", *Dawn*, March 22, 2017)<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322079>.

⁴⁹ John Mearsheimer.Op.cit.56

would increase its strategic autonomy to counter China and dominate the South Asian region.⁵⁰ The Indian strategic plans show the indigenous Advanced Air Defence and Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) systems will form the outer cover with S-400 Air Defense Systems. The Barak-8 air missile defence system, which was developed in collaboration with Israel's aerospace industry- Barak-8 has the capability to hit multiple targets.⁵¹

In the South Asian region, mainly, there is competition between a middle power and a great regional power that generates an element of vulnerability and insecurity in the region. India has to compete with China but also seeks to limit Pakistan's capabilities. To enhance this capability, India is significantly increasing both "defensive and offensive" military capabilities. To strengthen its offensive capabilities, in September 2016, India signed a great defence deal with France for the acquisition of Rafale fighter aircraft and received 36 Rafale jets in July 2022.⁵² China installed an S-400 air defence system in 2018, and was the driving factor for India to acquire the same system, given the country's tense relations with its neighbor as well as the fact that the two countries compete with one another- India has recently deployed an S-400 unit in Punjab to keep an eye on its regional rival states particularly Pakistan.⁵³

⁵⁰ C.Raja. Mohan. 2020. "Today India's strategic autonomy is about coping with Beijing's challenge to its territorial integrity, sovereignty", *The Indian Express*, August 25.,2020)<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/reinventing-india-strategic-autonomy-china-us-6568347/>.

⁵¹ Ashish Dangwal, "Indian –Israel Barak-8 Air Defence System in Spotlight after Houthi Drone Missile Strikes on UAE", *Eurasia Times*, Januarys 28, 2022.

⁵² Joydeep Bose, "Ready to Provide Rafale Jets to India: France", *The Hindustan Times*, December 17, 2021.

⁵³ Krishan Kaushik. "Eye on China and Pakistan, first S-400 United Deployed in Punjab", *The Indian Express*, January 1, 2022.

Emerging Discriminatory Strategic Trends in South Asia

Emerging discriminatory security trends also pose a grave challenge to deterrence stability and exacerbate a prospective arms race in the region. The Indo-US nuclear deal and NSG waiver provide an undue advantage to India in the South Asian nuclear balance.⁵⁴ This deal has allowed India to utilize the indigenous reactors and fuel for the military buildup. The Indo-US strategic deal has greatly helped India strengthen its nuclear weapons capability as the latter makes qualitative and quantitative increments in its nuclear arsenal. According to defence analysts, this deal would help India develop many nuclear warheads. This deal has also accorded India the status of a de-facto nuclear weapons state. While on the other hand, Pakistan was denied any such deal by the US.⁵⁵ As Pakistan is considered China's strategic ally. Furthermore, beyond the regional binary, this trend not only poses a challenge to the already beleaguered Non-proliferation regime but also creates strategic instability in the region as both states are non-NPT states but are being treated differently. Resulting in discrimination and advancements in the military capabilities of one state over the other not only fuels a new arms race but also reduces the incentive to engage constructively to move forward.

Terrorism Factor: An Obstacle to Stability

Since the Kargil war of 1999, one of the recurring elements of instability seems to be the role of the non-state actors. The prospect of the occurrence of another crisis precipitated by non-state actors, which has the potential to escalate to an unimaginable level, is significant.⁵⁶ These

⁵⁴ *The Economic Times*, February 12, 2016.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/nsg-waiver-india-us-nuclear-deal-disturbed-stability-pakistan/articleshow/50962807.cms?from=mdr>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ Mohan Malik, "The Stability of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The Clash Between the State and Anti-State Actors",

non-state actors have been able to operate with relative impunity and have pushed the two nuclear states to the verge of war on more than one occasion.

Given the history of the past one and half decades, the efficacy of the non-state actors in launching operations which in turn increases animosity and misperception between the two regional rivals seems to be a rising threat. The comparative ability of a small group of dedicated terrorists to dent deterrence stability in South Asia has become a great challenge. In addition, terrorist organizations can orchestrate an attack – their activities remain unpredictable and increase insecurity in the strategic stability in the region.

Threat Perception and Prioritization

In South Asia, threat perception and priorities are determined by the state's political and military leadership. Therefore, it would be pertinent to prioritize the likely emergence of the most imminent threats to stability and peace in South Asia. The Indian second-strike capability, growing conventional asymmetry and development of Ballistic Missile Defence are the most impending threats to deterrence stability. India modernized its Submarine (INS Arihant) - the idea was developed in 1970, and the then prime minister Indra Gandhi proposed the name of secret INS-Arihant and the code name was Advanced Technology Vehicle (ATV).⁵⁷ The top secret indigenous project was completed in 2016,⁵⁸ and

<https://apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/ReligiousRadicalism/PagesfromReligiousRadicalismandSecurityinSouthAsiach13.pdf>.

⁵⁷ "India's first nuke submarine INS Arihant launched", *NDTV*, July 26, 2009. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indias-first-nuke-submarine-ins-arihant-launched-398648>.

⁵⁸ Manu Pubby. 2009, "Top Secret 11 yrs in Making, Submarine Faces Crucial Test Ahead", *The Indian Express*, July 27, 2009.

it became operational in 2018.⁵⁹ Arihant is capable of carrying ballistic missiles.⁶⁰ Non-nuclear tipped Brahmos,⁶¹ supersonic cruise missile and Nirbhay subsonic cruise missile can also be launched from Arihant's platform.⁶² Nirbhay can be used to deliver both conventional and nuclear,⁶³ India deployed the Nirbhay missile at the Line of Actual Control to counter China's threat.⁶⁴ This assured second-strike capability of India will further complicate the India-Pakistan nuclear competition. However, Pakistan has developed the 'Ababeel missile' to counter India's defence system. Ababeel missile is "capable to carry nuclear warheads, engaging multiple targets, and defeating hostile radars".

The most major threat to deterrence stability is growing conventional asymmetry which upsets the strategic balance between the two countries in South Asia. Due to economic and budgetary constraints, Pakistan cannot match the rapidly growing conventional gap. This conventional asymmetry will further augment a never-ending arms race in the region because Pakistan considers every Indian move a threat to its security and tries to counter it, which would exhaust Pakistan's fragile economy. Conventional asymmetry is the result of a regional arms race, and a constant feature of the regional balance may be the economic weakness of Pakistan is creating a dangerous situation for the over-dependence on nuclear weapons.

⁵⁹ Sushil Ramsay, "INS Arihant fully Operational and Raring to Go", *Naval Forces*, (2018), <https://www.spsnavalforces.com/story/?id=582&h=INS-Arihant-Fully-Operational-and-Raring-to-Go>.

⁶⁰ "India's First Nuclear Power Submarine Ready For Deterrence Petrol From 2015", *Business Standard*, February 7, 2014.

⁶¹ Joy Mitra, "Nuclear BrhaMos: On the Anvil?", *Stimson*, September 18, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2020/nuclear-brahmos-on-the-anvil/>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Shishir Gupta, "Nirbhay Cruise Missile Tested-Fire: Indigenous Engine a Success", *Hindustan Times*, August 11, 2021.

⁶⁴ Shiv Aroor, "India Deploys Long-Range Missile Nirbhay to Counter Chinese Threat at LAC", *India Today*, September 28, 2020.

The development of BMDS by India create a huge security dilemma for maintaining a strategy of “deterrence stability” in South Asia. India has already advanced the two layers of its MDS and is heading towards deployment of this system over its two major cities, Bombay and Delhi. This deployment of a missile shield will give India immense confidence to operationalize its cold start doctrine to punish Pakistan and thereby would increase Pakistan’s vulnerability to India's military coercion would surpass offensive armaments, resulting in instability in the South Asian region.

Conclusion

In South Asia, deterrence stability is imperative to maintain peace and stability in the region. It plays most important role as it is believed that maintenance of a credible nuclear deterrent capability and strategic balance is the only guarantee to ensure peace and stability and to avoid war in the region having three nuclear rival states India, China, and Pakistan. Strategic stability is weak in the region owing to a rapid regional arms race between the regional nuclear states. In the recent past, India’s launch of Brahmos missile into Pakistan's territory, has increased regional security concerns, irresponsible and irrational state behavior that may lead to a warlike situation.

The Indian military modernization to compete with China and counter Pakistan has immensely exacerbated the regional strategic instability. The rapid arms race in South Asia is posing a pernicious security threat and has disturbed the regional security order. An environment of mistrust, has exacerbated regional instability. Existing challenges have widened the gulf in South Asian rival states instead of cooperation. There is a need to address those challenges to preserve long-term deterrence stability, peace and stability and South Asia. India and Pakistan should adopt a regional centric nuclear deterrence theoretical approach. It would play a stabilizing role in constraining

crises, frequent occurrence and preserving volatile peace in South Asia. It would introduce transparency between the two states and reduce the level of uncertainty, misinformation, misperceptions, and escalation of tensions. As a result, it would induce clarity in formulating their future security and foreign policies.

South Asian security arrangement is dangerous and complex. Both states, India and Pakistan, should develop a framework to define and commit to a level of minimum credible deterrence to sustain a stable balance in the region. It would stabilize their nuclear deterrence postures. India-Pakistan should maintain a credible retaliation capability to restrain each other. Both states should increase reliance on recessed deterrence and maintain peace and strategic stability in South Asia. The two traditional rivals, India and Pakistan, must work on a progressive and result-oriented dialogue process to resolve bilateral issues-which are resolvable. All regional states should develop and strengthen confidence and security-building measures, which go a long way towards limiting the possibility of crafting limited warmongering doctrines. The rising economic power of India has given the opportunity to increase the cost of competition for Pakistan. But the effects of this policy may have serious implications for the region that would lead Pakistan to change its strategic policy.

JCPOA and Challenges for Non-Proliferation Regime

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Abstract

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement is a landmark accord that has deep implications for regional security and the global Non-Proliferation Regime. The revival of this agreement is a cumbersome challenge for the Biden administration, as the Trump withdrawal from this deal in 2018 caused a significant setback to its efficiency in blocking Iran's path to building nuclear weapons. With the JCPOA no longer effective to restrict Iran's nuclear ambitions, there is an urgent threat that the Middle East would be plunged into a nuclear arms race and strategic vulnerability. The Non-Proliferation Regime is facing a number of challenges which include a revival of the JCPOA nuclear deal, power imbalances, security dilemma, polarization among regional countries, continuing proliferation activities, regional security concerns, and domestic political pressures. The recent outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war has intensified Iranian insecurities in forgoing their nuclear program, as Iran feels threatened by its regional adversaries; Israel and Saudi Arabia. Iranian hardliners in empowered

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positions are steering Iran further away from the JCPOA owing to the security dilemma. A sustainable and comprehensive nuclear deal must be reached with Iran to avoid a nuclear arms race and further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. This article aims to explore a) how the deal shall impact domestic and global security in terms of the Non-Proliferation Regime and, b) how the JCPOA is a decisive agreement for the fate of the Non-Proliferation regime.

Keywords: JCPOA, Arms Race, Nuclear Proliferation, Iran, US

Introduction

The JCPOA was the result of joint diplomatic efforts made by major world powers after a myriad of global speculations regarding the true aspirations of Iran behind its nuclear program. In 2015, Iran signed a long-term agreement on the issue of its nuclear program with a group of major world powers known as the P5+1.³ In 2018, the Trump administration withdrew the United States (US) from the deal, causing a huge setback to the JCPOA and the progress the deal had made toward supporting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.⁴ "If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States will rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations," Biden wrote in September 2020.⁵ After Biden took office, he promised to revive the JCPOA deal to its original essence and persuade Iran back into compliance with the terms of the agreement, however, the recent

³ Mark Fitzpatrick, "Assessing the JCPOA." *Adelphi Series* 57, no. 466-467 (2017): 19-60.

⁴ Farhad Rezaei, "JCPOA Collapse: Will Proliferation Follow?." *Middle East Policy* 26, no. 2 (2019): 48-61.

⁵ Garrett Nada and Caitlin Crahan. "Joe Biden on Iran." *The Iran Primer*, September 27, 2022. <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/nov/09/joe-biden-iran>

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developments in the international and domestic arena have made the revival of the JCPOA a much bigger challenge than it was originally expected to be. In the absence of the JCPOA, Iran is more susceptible to using its nuclear program to build nuclear weapons and potentially triggering a nuclear arms race in the region. This nuclear arms race could threaten the fragile balance of power in the Middle East and devastate regional stability and the Non-Proliferation Regime. The global efforts made so far, to preserve international security and the Non-Proliferation Regime could all prove worthless if the JCPOA remains in a stalemate, given the political tensions with Iran.

Relations soured between Iran and the US under Trump's presidency when he withdrew from the deal and launched a series of aggressive actions against Iran under his 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign.⁶ The action only resulted in Iran fighting back full force with a policy it termed as 'Maximum Resistance' by defying more and more of the restrictions and conditions that the JCPOA had primarily enforced on Iran.⁷ Donald Trump devised that the JCPOA was inadequate in its restrictions to curtail the magnitude of the threat that Iran poses to global security.⁸ The JCPOA cannot promise that Iran would not resume its endeavors to build a nuclear bomb after the deal expires, nor does it deter Iran to shut down its ballistic missile program.⁹ On the

⁶ Holly Dages, "The 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign Undermines Trump's National Security Strategy." *Atlantic Council*, February 12, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/the-maximum-pressure-campaign-undermines-trumps-national-security-strategy/>

⁷ Kayhan Barzegar, "The hard chess puzzle: Trump's 'maximum pressure' versus Iran's 'maximum resistance'." *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies* (2020), <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/hard-chess-puzzle-trump%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98maximum-pressure%E2%80%99-versus-iran%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98maximum-resistance%E2%80%99>

⁸ Hossein Nourani, Afsaneh Danesh, Mohammad Reza Nouri, and Farzaneh Latifi. "Discursive (De) legitimization of the Iran Nuclear Deal in Donald Trump's Tweets." *Strategic Analysis* 44, no. 4 (2020): 332-345.

⁹ Mark Fitzpatrick, Michael Elleman, and Paulina Izewicz. *Uncertain Future: The JCPOA and Iran's Nuclear and Missile Programmes* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019)

international scene, the United States lost face value as such irrational decisions of the president made the US appear unreliable in uplifting the non-proliferation efforts.

Another splinter in Biden's path towards reviving the JCPOA is the sudden outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia demands written guarantees that the JCPOA would not affect Iran-Russia trade.¹⁰ The war itself has caused Iran to feel more vulnerable to giving up its nuclear potential, given the drastic consequences Ukraine is facing. These developments set the JCPOA further back in its progress to actualize a revival. An Iranian nuclear bomb or possession of nuclear weapons would have disastrous consequences for the regional and international order because other regional actors, especially Saudi Arabia, would take steps to acquire nuclear weapons as well, setting off a lethal race of nuclear arms acquisition in the Middle East.

"Trump has repeatedly ratcheted up tensions, risking bringing us closer to another Middle Eastern war without a realistic strategy or endgame," said Joe Biden in September 2020.¹¹

Biden's administration feels responsible for making calculated decisions because aggressive coercion against Iran would only push the JCPOA further away from a peaceful revival. Iran demands compensation for the losses it had suffered under the crippling economic sanctions and wants to redeem its maligned reputation after being enlisted in the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list.¹² With

¹⁰ Stephen Blank, "Beyond the reset policy: current dilemmas of US–Russia relations." *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 4 (2010): 333-367.

¹¹ Joe Biden, "Joe Biden: There's a Smarter Way to Be Tough on Iran." *CNN*. Cable News Network, September 13, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/13/opinions/smarter-way-to-be-tough-on-iran-joe-biden/index.html>

¹² Melissa Sanford, "'This is a Game': A History of the Foreign Terrorist Organization and State Sponsors of Terrorism Lists and their Applications." *History in the Making* 13, no. 1 (2020): 10.

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Iranian hardliners in empowered positions, the Ukraine debacle, and the success of the Abraham Accords, Iran's demands for the JCPOA have changed, and so has the structure of regional and international politics. There are more stakes and stakeholders involved, and the Biden administration is caught in between the fragile thread of stability and chaos in the Middle East. Since Biden was the Vice President during Obama's presidency, he and his team consciously believed that the JCPOA is a solution to nuclear proliferation. The current state of stalemate between Iran and the United States over the JCPOA will not remain static for long and soon President Biden would have to take a decisive step toward bringing back the JCPOA deal into effect to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and also to achieve a foreign policy win.

Theorizing the JCPOA puzzle

The security dilemma is shaping regional structures and shifting alliances in the Middle East. Iran's decision-makers are increasingly motivated by the security dilemma, as the national security threats perceived by Iran are looming all over the Middle East. A US-backed crackdown on Iran may include aggressive options like forced regime change, military intervention, or more economic sanctions on Iran. The distrust that developed among Iranian policy-makers after the Trump withdrawal is still oozing like a fresh wound. US-backed regime changes in Iraq and Libya stand as striking examples, which strengthen the insecurity within Iran about its political integrity.¹³ The Abraham Accords which were finalized under the Trump administration is an exhibition of an evolving bloc between Israel and the Gulf states nurturing Iran's distrust towards the West, especially towards the United States, and their promises of economic security and cooperation. Iran also watched the Ukraine conflict unfold as the European countries initially stayed neutral until

¹³ Robert S. Litwak, and Robert Litwak. *Regime change: US strategy through the prism of 9/11*. (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2007).

Russia launched a full-fledged attack on Ukraine, compromising its territories and national security. To Iran, it seems like a glimpse of its future if it willingly forgoes its nuclear program like Ukraine did and gets overwhelmed by its regional adversaries, more prominently Israel and Saudi Arabia. With the finalization of the Abraham Accords, more Arab countries have begun to close their distance from Israel as they look for collaborative defense projects with a strong military potential like that of Israel.¹⁴

The US withdrawal from the JCPOA, maximum pressure campaign sanctions, Abraham Accords, and the Russia-Ukraine war have all influenced Iran's decision-makers to grow reluctant to reaffirm the JCPOA deal. These political circumstances along with the long-standing religious and cultural confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran have resulted in Iran's growing security dilemma in the region. There is a lack of assurance that Iran's national security interests would not be violated with or without the bomb. The security dilemma of Iran is detrimental to the non-proliferation cause because the more insecure Iran feels in its neighborhood and the more threatening its regional adversaries seem, the less likely Iran is to agree to the restrictions of the JCPOA.

The realist point of view suggests that there exists a certain structural compulsion on the key players which dictates their thought processes and decision-making. Iran is completely isolated from the rest of the world with its limited trade routes, inaccessibility to the international economy, a maligned image in media and global public opinion along with an authoritarian government. Iran's designation in the FTO list and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist caused it to develop structural differences with the rest of the international community. The crippling sanctions and the limited access to trade with the world have resulted in Iran's economy deflating with a high rate of

¹⁴ Amr Yossef, "The regional impact of the Abraham Accords." *Modern War Institute* 2, no. 1 (2021).

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inflation. Iran's domestic sociopolitical problems, power transition to Iranian hardliners, and public dissent at home have all added up to influence its outlook on the matter of the JCPOA. Iran's differences may be the result of its structural difficulties, but they pose a huge risk of an arms race and a full-scale war in the Middle East.

The JCPOA agreement can be viewed through Charles Glaser's lens, where he argues that cooperation in peacetime is made to resist an arms race.¹⁵ This argument connects the JCPOA with the protection of the Non-Proliferation Regime, as it is the main objective for the revival of the nuclear deal. Glaser suggests that countries can better achieve their self-interests through cooperative means instead of always opting for competitive approaches.¹⁶ If Iran understands the threat that a nuclear arms race poses to its own national and security interests, then it would opt to avoid an arms race by signing the agreement because a nuclear arms race may have unpredictable outcomes and either actor could end up in an even more disadvantageous position than it was before it armed itself with nukes. Although the P5+1 may be more highly equipped militarily, they are still unaware of Iran's true potential and ambitions, and therefore instead of an aggressive approach to containing Iran's threat of triggering an arms race, they may approach Iran through peaceful cooperation and acts of self-restraint.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Non-Proliferation Regime

The JCPOA is a comprehensive agreement signed by Iran and P5+1 countries during Obama's presidency.¹⁷ Spanning over 159 pages are the terms and conditions of the deal that place restrictions on Iran on the

¹⁵ Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as optimists: Cooperation as self-help." *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996): 122-163.

¹⁶ Charles L. Glaser, "The security dilemma revisited." *World politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 171-201.

¹⁷ Emily B. Landau, "Obama's Legacy, a Nuclear Iran?" *Middle East Quarterly* (2017),

issue of its nuclear program.¹⁸ The JCPOA deal is acknowledged as a signature legacy left behind by Obama when he was the President of the United States. The deal was comprehensive and all-encompassing, with minor risks of nuclear proliferation outbreak.

The JCPOA agreement was Obama's milestone achievement in containing Iran's nuclear ambitions, hindering its path to building nuclear weapons and uplifting the Non-Proliferation Regime. However, the deal got scrapped and thrown into remission when Trump took office. One of his highlight goals during his election campaign was to reverse the 'mistakes' that Obama had made while in office, which included pulling the United States out of the 'one-sided' JCPOA deal as it was not a sustainable solution to keeping Iran's nuclear program in check.¹⁹ Trump's main concerns regarding the signature foreign policy deal of the Obama administration were its expiration date till 2031 and the exclusion of Iran's Ballistic Missile program along with its regional proxies.²⁰ Trump, adhering to the promises from his presidential campaign, claimed that he would renegotiate a better deal with Iran by force which would not only hinder its path towards acquiring nuclear weapons but also cover Iran's ballistic missiles program and proxy warfare.²¹ He launched a series of aggressive actions and economic

¹⁸ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Iran nuclear deal: Mountain of uncertainties," Observer Research Foundation, July 17, 2015, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/iran-nuclear-deal-mountain-of-uncertainties/>

¹⁹ Mark Landler, "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned." The New York Times. The New York Times, May 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>

²⁰ Heinz Gärtner, "The Fate of the JCPOA," In *Iran in the International System*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 56-76.

²¹ Matthew Kroenig, "The return to the pressure track: The trump administration and the Iran nuclear deal." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 29, no. 1 (2018): 94-104.

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sanctions against Iran, under his Maximum Pressure Campaign, crippled Iran economically and pushed its domestic politics into chaos.²²

The Maximum Pressure campaign only resulted in the souring of the relations between Iran and the US, leaving Biden with a menacing challenge to resolve through diplomacy and peaceful negotiation. Iran refuses to have direct talks with US representatives and therefore the EU is playing the middle man in the indirect talks taking place regarding the revival of the JCPOA which so far have borne no fruit.²³ Trump is widely criticized for his foreign policy moves, fostered by his lack of commitment to the Non-Proliferation Regime. Israeli and Saudi lobbies in the US had played a grand role in influencing Trump to follow through with the JCPOA withdrawal.²⁴ Israel and Saudi Arabia applauded Trump for disengaging with the JCPOA deal, and so did the populist republicans at home, who had always been the front-line critics of the JCPOA deal since the day of its signing.²⁵

Iran has placed a heavy demand for allowing the US to sit in direct talks with Iranian representatives, and this condition is a hard pill to swallow for Biden. After the assassination of the Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani and the listing of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on the Foreign Terrorist Organization

²² Suzanne Maloney, "After Dumping the Nuclear Deal, Trump Has No Strategy for Iran," *Brookings*, March 9, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/05/09/after-dumping-the-nuclear-deal-trump-has-no-strategy-for-iran/>

²³ James Phillips, and Peter Brookes. "Iran's Nuclear Humpty Dumpty: The JCPOA Should Not Be Put Back Together Again," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* 3661, October 132, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/report/irans-nuclear-humpty-dumpty-the-jcpoa-should-not-be-put-back-together-again>

²⁴ Hussein Ibish, "Gulf Leaders Welcome JCPOA Withdrawal but Plan B Remains Unclear." *Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, March 1, 2019, <https://agsiw.org/gulf-leaders-welcome-jcpoa-withdrawal-but-plan-b-remains-unclear/>

²⁵ Muhammad Riaz Shad, and Tansir Abbas, "US Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: The Causes and the Implications." *Pakistan Journal of American Studies* 36, no. 1 (2018): 1-20.

(FTO) list, Iran demanded the removal of the terrorist designation and international sanctions to be lifted from the IRGC for diplomatic tensions between Iran and the US to be resolved.²⁶ Iran refuses to engage in direct talks with the US unless its demands are met, which has become a bone of contention for the Biden Presidency, as it is highly unlikely for the US to comply with them.²⁷ For now, Iran values its international reputation and economy over acquiring nuclear weapons, but this could change drastically if the domestic political scene shifts or the Ukraine conflict influences the Iranian perspective on the importance of its nuclear program.

Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine war has created unforeseen hindrances to the revival of the JCPOA. When the whole world had its eyes trained on the potential threat of Iran's nuclear program, the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out, stealing away all the international attention from it. Eleven months of negotiations took place in Vienna between Iranian and other party representatives from member countries like China, Russia, France, Germany, and Britain excluding the US since Iran refuses direct diplomacy with America.²⁸

While the EU and the US are busy supplying support for Ukraine, Iran's nuclear ambitions remain unchecked, which is the cause of growing insecurity for its regional adversaries, more prominent among whom are Israel and Saudi Arabia. If Iran takes the opportunity to build

²⁶ Amrit Burman, "Iran Drops Demand to Delist IRGC from US' FTO List as Nuclear Talks Continue: Report." *Republic World*, August 20, 2022, <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/middle-east/iran-drops-demand-to-delist-irgc-from-us-fto-list-as-nuclear-talks-continue-report-articleshow.html>

²⁷ Summar Iqbal Babar, Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, and Irfan Hasnain Qaisrani. 2021. "Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA): Prospects And Challenges For The Global Security". *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 9 (1), 126-32.

²⁸ Parisa Hafezi and Arshad Mohammed, "EU Puts Forward 'Final' Text to Resurrect Iran Nuclear Deal," *Reuters*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-nuclear-negotiators-return-tehran-vienna-irna-2022-08-08/>

JCPOA and Challenges for Non-Proliferation Regime

a nuclear bomb, it would only be a matter of time before its non-nuclear regional adversaries follow suit, plunging the Middle East into a nuclear proliferation race in the name of national security.

Russia, seeking the opportunity to stall the JCPOA revival as it no longer remains in its interest, put forward its demands. Russia claimed that there was no written guarantee that the US would not withdraw from the deal in the future, and so there must be some form of a written commitment of the United States to remain a member of the JCPOA.²⁹ That would mean that the USA would be under some binding restrictions to remain a member of the revived JCPOA deal, which goes against the American ideal of unrestrained discretion in multilateral agreements. Russia also demands that the sanctions that will be lifted off of Iran as part of the JCPOA agreement post-revival should have nothing to do with Iran-Russia trade, implying that after the JCPOA comes back into effect, Iran's oil trade with Russia should remain unsanctioned and unaffected by international tariffs.³⁰ This demand goes against all US forbearance, since allowing the oil trade between Russia and Iran would practically imply that Russian acts against Ukraine are acceptable under some conditions. If the JCPOA is revived, so will the bilateral relations between the US and Iran and that should mean that Iran must sever all ties to Russia and end all forms of trade with Russia, given its violations of international law and aggression against an American ally. Such controversial demands are only aiding in undermining the non-proliferation efforts.

A lesson that can be taken from the Russia-Ukraine scuffle is the neorealist perspective on nuclear proliferation, more prominently the

²⁹ Parisa Hafezi, Francois Murphy, "Russia's Demand for US Guarantees May Hit Nuclear Talks, Iran Official Says," *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, March 5, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-nuclear-official-kamlavandi-says-god-willing-there-will-be-an-understanding-2022-03-05/>

³⁰ Stephen Blank, "Beyond the reset policy: current dilemmas of US–Russia relations." *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 4 (2010): 333-367.

idea of Kenneth Waltz, which brings the international approach toward containing the nuclear threat to global security into question. According to Waltz, it is safer for all countries to arm themselves with nuclear arsenals instead of cracking down on them for achieving nuclear potential.³¹ When all the countries would be nuclear-armed, there is a high probability that nuclear deterrence would come into effect and countries would avoid going to war with each other, understanding the magnitude of destruction that nuclear warfare can bring to all countries involved. There are a number of Global Tension Areas in contemporary world politics. A prominent case study is that of Pakistan and India, who are both regional adversaries but are nuclear-armed and have avoided going into a full-scale war with each other since their nuclear tests.³² Though there is much criticism of this concept, there is still the question that stands in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war. *If Ukraine had kept its nuclear program in 1994 which was the third largest of its kind, would Russia have launched an attack on its borders?*

Taking into perspective the successful example of nuclear deterrence that comes into play considering Pakistan and North Korea, it is hard to deny that perhaps the situation would have been different if Ukraine was equipped with nuclear weapons. Pakistan and North Korea serve as live examples of how it is extremely hard to keep an ambitious country from acquiring nuclear weaponry, and such might be the case for Iran if it is truly determined to build a nuclear bomb. The global threat that Iran's JCPOA decision poses to international security and the Non-Proliferation Regime is whether Iran too might become

³¹ Ben Polsky, "Nuclear Credibility: What the United States Lost in Ukraine and Pakistan and the Implications for the Iran Deal," *Atlantic Council*, June 30, 2015, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nuclear-credibility-what-the-united-states-lost-in-ukraine-and-pakistan-and-the-implications-for-the-iran-deal/>

³² Antoine Levesques, Desmond Bowen, and Jack Gill, "Nuclear Deterrence and Stability in South Asia: Perceptions and Realities," *IISS*, May 20, 2021, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/research-paper/2021/05/nuclear-deterrence-south-asia>

another Global Tension Area where the risk of war and an arms race is highly contingent.

The more defining point for a country's foreign policy trajectory is how it is treated on the international scene once it comes forward with its nukes to the world. If it is shunned away along with limitless punishments like North Korea, its existence may become a bane to global security, but if it is recognized by the international nuclear community and given incentives to use its potential for a global cause like Pakistan's contribution in fighting the War on Terror and receiving the US support and funding, they may prove to be an ally and less threatening than originally perceived by the international community.³³

Iranians have been made aware of the consequences of shutting down their nuclear program and forgoing their potential to build a bomb through the unfortunate example of Ukraine. The great power allies like the US and the EU who had promised it protection remained unhelpful until Ukraine's borders were invaded by Russia.³⁴ The inability of the US and other major power allies to efficiently protect Ukraine's national security has exposed the asymmetry of the world to Iran, and it has grown distrustful of the promises of the West. With growing insecurity due to its regional adversaries like the US-backed allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran is more reluctant than ever to forgo its nuclear program. According to the realist Kenneth Waltz, allowing Iran to forge a nuclear weapon could potentially balance out the power gap in the Middle East, which is the root cause of its instability. Iran and Israel may end up deterring each other, but this perspective ignores the presence of Saudi

³³ Summar Iqbal Babar, Imran Ali Sandano, and Syed Fraz Hussain Naqvi Syed. "Peace Process in Korean Peninsula: Prospects and Challenges." *Asia-Pacific - Annual Research Journal of Far East & South East Asia*. Accessed September 27, 2022.

³⁴ David S. Yost, "The Budapest Memorandum and Russia's intervention in Ukraine," *International Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2015): 505-538.

Arabia, which could feel increasingly vulnerable if Iran were to acquire a nuclear bomb.

Challenges for Non-Proliferation Regime

Numerous challenges lie ahead for not only the JCPOA, but also for the Non-Proliferation Regime.

- a) A JCPOA revival
- b) The threat of nuclear proliferation
- c) Regional security concerns

The future of the Non-Proliferation Regime depends upon whether an agreement is reached with Iran on the issue of its nuclear program. With rising inflation, increasing domestic polarization, changing political landscape, and higher stakes regarding Iranian proxy warfare, Iran is growing more and more unsure of whether a revival of the JCPOA is going to be in its best interest. After the Ukraine debacle, Iran is increasingly concerned about its national security rather than economic security.

With the changing political discussion on the international and domestic scene, Iran is more reluctant than ever to pursue a revival of the JCPOA and resultantly forgo its determination to build nuclear weapons. After Trump carried through with his promise of turning the Abraham Accords into a reality on August 13, 2020,³⁵ Iran has grown conscious and vulnerable in its neighborhood. Israel has maintained the position of deliberate ambiguity regarding its nuclear program, which is substantially an open secret.³⁶ Israeli military potential has developed

³⁵Leonardo Jacopo Maria Mazzucco, and Kristian Alexander, "The Abraham Accords Two Years on: From Ambition to Reality," *Real Instituto Elcano*, August 17, 2022, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/the-abraham-accords-two-years-on-from-ambition-to-reality/>

³⁶Natasha Afzal Kayani, "Deliberately Ambiguous: Israel's Policy of 'Nuclear Opacity'." *SASSI University*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/the-abraham-accords-two-years-on-from-ambition-to-reality/>.

into one of the strongest in the world, which is an inviting subject of defense collaborations for the Arab world as they gradually gravitate towards Israel. Since major regional players of the Middle East like the UAE and Bahrain³⁷ have decided to ease their tensions with Israel, Iran has grown more insecure about its role and influence in the region. Trump's policies resulted in making Iran insecure and vulnerable in the region³⁸ and therefore, it is hesitant to compromise on its national security in exchange for economic relief. To protect the Non-Proliferation Regime, Biden must take steps to assure Iran that it will be more secure than ever if it willingly forgoes its nuclear ambitions.

If Iran ends up building a nuclear bomb and formally announces its admission into the international nuclear community, Saudi Arabia would feel the urgent necessity to build one for its national security interests. This would set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, which is the most urgent risk to the Non-Proliferation Regime. For the JCPOA revival to be a success, the United States must keep in mind the regional national security interests of all stakeholders involved because a regionally accepted agreement is less likely to invite insecurity and anarchy in the Middle East. Biden must realize that halting nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is a key challenge for his administration, and it is only possible through a decisive nuclear deal that Iran and other regional players would readily accept.

The domestic politics of Iran is also at a turning point where Rouhani may be at risk of being unsuccessful in winning his re-election. Iran's new government could potentially comprise conservatives that have been vocal about their displeasure with the JCPOA and its strict

³⁷ Varsha Koduvayur, and David Daoud. "Welcome to a Brand-New Middle East," *Foreign Policy*, September 30, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/30/israel-uae-bahrain-palestinians-peace/>

³⁸ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Iran and the Palestinians Lose out in the Abraham Accords," *The Atlantic*. *Atlantic Media Company*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/winners-losers/616364/>

restrictions on Iran in exchange for sanctions relief.³⁹ After the US withdrawal under the Trump administration, Rouhani suffered a huge backlash at home for the failure of the deal and the resulting economic instability due to the sanctions levied under the Maximum Pressure Campaign.⁴⁰ Inflation in Iran is high, and the domestic rhetoric is shifting against trusting the US with another chance for the JCPOA revival. With the new traditionalist conservative party that disapproves of Iran's reintegration into the capitalist global economy, Iran would be pushed further away from reaching an agreement with the US.

Another plausible challenge is to bring the major powers into compliance with the revived JCPOA agreement. If there is a repeat of the Trump episode where a new administration is in complete denial of the prospects of the JCPOA deal and withdraws the United States from it once again, it may be the last straw for Iran to go nuclear and trigger nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. This uncertainty goes well-beyond Biden's capacities and therefore, there must be some criteria that ensure that the superpower would not withdraw from the deal without clear, justifiable reason. The unrestrained powers that are vested with P5+1 can nullify the agreement at any given moment and overturn the efforts that have been made to secure the Non-Proliferation Regime. Furthermore, the JCPOA discussion has also questioned the credibility of the major powers that have so far been incapable of implementing a mutually agreed deal. The protection of the Non-Proliferation Regime demands a comprehensive long-standing JCPOA agreement, not a short-lived unsustainable arrangement. Therefore, any new deal between Iran and the P5+1 must be based on negotiation and agreement over mutual self-interests and the provision

³⁹ Alireza Nader, Ali G. Scotten, and James Hoobler, "Iranian Domestic Issues Could Challenge the Nuclear Deal," *RAND Corporation*, May 10, 2017,

⁴⁰ Reuters. "Iran Hardliners Gain Authority in Backlash That Could Sideline Hasan Rouhani." *NDTV.com*. *NDTV*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-politics-backlash-insight-idUSKCN0ZY13R>.

of national security to major stakeholders, rather than simply promises of economic prosperity and trust.

Conclusion

Efforts for rescuing the JCPOA are at a climactic moment in international discussions. Though the Russia-Ukraine war has significantly reduced the attention it was primarily receiving on the global political scene, it is still considered to be a pressing matter with the largest stakes vested in Iran's decision. Whether the JCPOA is revived or not, the implications it will have on the Non-Proliferation Regime are of enormous magnitude and so are the challenges that it poses for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Iran and the United States are in a "you-first" dilemma,⁴¹ urging the other to realize its responsibility to take the first step toward a mutually agreed nuclear deal. Iran is still distrustful of the US and rightly so considering the actions of the previous government under Trump who withdrew from the deal and levied crippling sanctions on the Iranian economy. The United States must take the first step forward to persuade Iran into renegotiating a nuclear commitment. A JCPOA revival shall put the international community at peace regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons and prevent Iran from becoming another global tension area with the risk of a war outbreak.

The JCPOA deal encourages Iran to alter its aggressive and untrusting foreign policy toward the West and let the United States and the other major powers ensure protection for Iran's national security interests if it willingly lets go of its nuclear ambitions. Once the sanctions would be lifted from Iran, it would be allowed to provide for its defense through arms trade and integration into the global economy. It could

⁴¹ Cornelius Adebahr, "The Iran Deal's 'You First' Dilemma." The Iran Deal's 'You First' dilemma – Foreign and security policy | IPS Journal. IPS Journal, September 7, 2022, <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/foreign-and-security-policy/the-us-and-iran-are-caught-up-in-a-you-first-dilemma-4957/>

help Iran feel more at par with its regional adversaries instead of opting for the nuclear way to deter its enemies away. The United States must consider negotiating a deal that can ensure long-term national and international security interests and protect the Non-Proliferation Regime from disintegrating in the Middle East. This can only be achieved if Biden thinks through all perspectives especially that of Iran which has the largest stake in the matter, and pursues cooperation based on trust, and economic and national security.

BOOK REVIEW

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, 359.

Reviewed by Sabiha Mehreen¹

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 Zulfiqar 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

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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 second-strike 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, rational-irrational 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 unavailability 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 nuclear-armed 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.

Modi's India, Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy

Christophe, Jaffrelot. Princeton University Press, 2021, 639.

Reviewed By: Mahwish Hafeez²

Written by renowned author Christophe Jaffrelot and translated by Cynthia Schoch, the voluminous book with over 600 pages gives a unique insight into the Indian political system and its journey from conservative democracy (1950s – 1960s) to the democratization of democracy (late 1980s) to its present form which the author has termed as ethnic democracy or electoral democracy (2014).

In the first part of the book, the author traces the history of Hindu nationalism, which has its roots in several socio-religious reform movements that were initiated following the arrival of Europeans, particularly missionaries to the Indian subcontinent. The author then goes on to explain the ideology of Hindu nationalism and who could be considered as Hindu. In order to defend Hindus from foreign influence, a movement named Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was founded in 1925 with its vast network of affiliates. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a follower of RSS resulted in the state imposing a ban on the organization, which forced RSS to launch its own political party. Thus, Bharatiya Jana Sangh came into being in 1951 and later became Bharatiya Janata Party.

The author discusses in great detail the political journey of India's incumbent Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The author believes that Modi's rise to power, primarily due to his populist stance, marked a turning point in Sangh Parivar's history. Without ignoring the core

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ideology of the movement, Modi brought a new dimension to Hindutva because of his populist style.

The second part of the book begins with a discussion on the term ethnic democracy, which means "some citizens do not have the same rights as others simply because of their religious identity" (p.156). In the case of India, this ethnic democracy found expression in various ways, particularly in Modi's second term. The BJP government, both at the center and the state level, promoted Hindu culture by increasing the legal protection of cows, going after dissidents and shrinking space for NGOs. The situation of minorities, particularly Christians and Muslims, further deteriorated. Both these communities were stigmatized, and campaigns were launched against them by vigilante groups related to Sangh Parivar, particularly the Bajrang Dal. Though Hindu vigilante groups were present prior to Modi's regime, but with Modi at the helm of affairs, these vigilante groups and the violence inflicted by them became more systematic instilling fear in the hearts of minorities. These vigilante groups are not only protected but also sponsored by Sangh Parivar leaders who have either infiltrated into state apparatus or have been elected to office.

Apart from that, massive propaganda campaigns on the internet that slander and spread hatred against minorities is equally active and systematic as the vigilante groups. Thus, Sangh Parivar is working to establish an ethnic democracy by conquering people's minds to impose culture and practices instead of law.

While describing the fate of those resisting the Hinduization of Indian society and are supporters of secularism, the author discusses in detail the case of India's one of the best universities, the Jawaharlal Nehru University. To curtail the progressive outlook of the university, the Modi government appointed people of its choice to head the university and bring the desired change. Besides, the RSS student wing,

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which is the largest student organization in India with 3.2 million members in 20,000 of the 35,000 institutions of higher learning (p.178), also played its role in moral policing and indulged in violent acts supported by police. The author then explains how the Modi government went after the NGOs. Among the NGOs that were targets of the Modi government included Greenpeace India, ANHAD (Act Now for Harmony and Democracy), the Lawyers Collective and Citizens for Justice and Peace.

The third part of the book extensively deals with the Indian version of competitive authoritarianism, where the author argues that populism often leads to authoritarianism. He believes national populists are more dangerous for democracies as they tend to ignore and exclude minorities, reducing them to second-class citizens. This itself is anti-democratic and is the case in India as vigilante groups have been let loose on minorities with the patronage of the state. Apart from that, an authoritarian state also tends to exert coercion by waging an attack on constitution and laws and to suppress all opposition. The state also exerts its influence over society by launching propaganda and disinformation campaigns through controlled media. The following chapters of part III discuss in detail how the Modi government has launched an attack on not only political opponents but also important state institutions.

The author then goes on to describe Modi's efforts to curtail judiciary -from delaying the appointment of the Lokpal to delaying the appointment against vacant positions in the Central Information Commission, which is the highest appealing organization under the Right to Information Act of 2005. Similarly, Modi's experience with the Central Bureau of Investigation, the premier investigating agency, which had been investigating cases of fake encounters in Gujarat when Modi was the Chief Minister, also had to bear the brunt once Modi was elected as the Prime Minister of India. Cadres from Gujarat were appointed, and

CBI was used against dissenting voices. The National Investigation Agency also met the same fate, particularly because it was investigating cases of terrorism where members of Hindu extremist groups were prime suspects. Following the 2014 elections, Hindu terror suspects were either released on bail and later acquitted or were not named in the charge sheet at all. But above all, it was the judiciary which also had to abdicate its powers and independence in the face of Modi's populism turned authoritarianism. The author gives three explanations for the fall of the judiciary. First, the pressure applied by the government, which shook the judiciary; second, Hindu nationalist and like-minded people's infiltration in the judiciary; and finally, the non-confrontational attitude of the judges.

Following judiciary and law enforcement agencies, the Modi government also went after the media, which is considered the fourth pillar of democracy. Modi had an uneasy relationship with the media since his days as chief minister of Gujarat. Once in power, Modi ignored the media and instead communicated directly with the public through Twitter and the monthly radio programme “Mann ki Baat” (p. 299). In order to curtail free media, Modi first reduced advertisements to media groups, media outlets were raided, TV channels were banned, media houses were pressurized to remove dedicated journalists, and all dissenting voices in media had to go through systematic harassment. Denying internet access is another issue in Modi's India.

The author feels that India's shift from national populism to electoral authoritarianism became more obvious during the 2019 election campaign because the electoral competition was not a level playing field due to reasons like the bias of the media and the election commission and the financial resources available at the disposal of the ruling party, i.e., the BJP. The author then goes on to discuss various techniques Modi applied in his election campaign, including building his image as a strongman against Pakistan. Today, as BJP has emerged as

the hegemon in Indian politics, Modi took some most controversial steps, including the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 A of the Constitution that gave special powers to India, illegally occupying Jammu and Kashmir and introducing Citizenship (Amendment) Act – in both cases, Muslims were the prime targets.

The last chapter of part III exclusively deals with the condition of Muslims under Modi's rule. Though Modi has never expressed any anti-Muslim sentiment in public but it is evident that since Modi came to power, the Muslim presence in important Institutions, including assemblies, has declined. However, the author also blames other political parties for the decline of the Muslim community from public space. Further, in the last couple of years, the judiciary has put a seal on the fate of Indian secularism and the establishment of the Hindu Raj.

This book gives a deep insight into the factors that led to the rise of Narendra Modi to power which in turn has led to the Hinduization of Indian society. The book discusses in detail the negative impact the rise of the BJP under Modi had on the lives of religious minorities, intelligentsia, academics, journalists, or anyone who dares to dissent. This book is a must-read for students of politics and international relations. This book is also a must-read for policymakers to understand the current trends in Indian politics and society so that a cohesive policy can be formulated viz-a-viz our eastern neighbor.



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