



VISION

VISIONARY INSIGHTS INTO THE STRATEGIC INQUESTS OF NATIONS

SVI FORESIGHT

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2018

Compiled & Edited by:
S. Sadia Kazmi

Strategic Vision Institute
Islamabad

SVI FORESIGHT

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4
APRIL 2018

Compiled & Edited by:
S. Sadia Kazmi



Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this edition are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Strategic Vision Institute.

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) is an autonomous, multidisciplinary and non-partisan institution, established in January 2013. It is a non-governmental and non-commercial organization, administered by a Board of Governors (General Body) supervised under a Chairperson and administered by a Management Committee headed by a President/Executive Director.

SVI aims to project strategic foresight on issues of national and international import through dispassionate, impartial and independent research, analyses and studies. The current spotlight of the SVI is on the national security, regional and international peace and stability, strategic studies, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, and strategic stability, nuclear safety and security and energy studies.

SVI Foresight

SVI Foresight is a monthly electronic journal. It has a multi-disciplinary perspective highlighting on the contemporary strategic and security studies. The Journal is envisioned to be a collection of policy-oriented articles written by its Research Associates, Visiting Faculty and professional experts. The objective is to provide the readership with a concise all-round and real-time policy oriented discourse on contemporary strategic regional and international developments, highlighting their relevance to Pakistan.

Contents

Editor's Note	1
Indian Ocean Politics and Pakistan's Economic Interests	2
Qura tul Ain Hafeez	
The Selective Policy of Great Powers in the Non-Proliferation Regime	4
Uzge Amer Saleem	
Optical Missile Tracking Systems and Minimum Credible Deterrence	6
Ahyousha Khan	
Negating Nuclear Bluff	8
Asma Khalid	
Pakistan-Maldives Growing Relation and Indian Apprehensions	10
Beenish Altaf	
How John Bolton as NSA would Impact Pakistan?.....	12
Ubaid Ahmed	
The Emerging Troika and the Syrian Conflict	14
Nisar Ahmed	
Babur Missile Test: Pakistan Validating its Second-Strike Capability	16
Ahyousha Khan	
China's Boao Forum for Asia and Economic Integration through CPEC	18
Qura tul Ain Hafeez	
The Significance of Nuclear Information Sharing in South Asia.....	20
Asma Khalid	
Why Does India Want More Presence in Afghanistan?	22
Uzge Amer Saleem	
Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Iran Triad and Israel	24
Nisar Ahmed	
Pak-US Relations and a Glimmer of Hope.....	26
Ubaid Ahmed	
The Problems with Non-Proliferation Regime	28
Beenish Altaf	

Editor's Note

SVI Foresight for the month of April displays an anthology of important short commentaries. Scholars at the SVI deliberated upon significant strategic and security issues providing correct and precise assessment of regional and global political developments, which evidently manifest itself in this e-volume. The articles' collection range from an analysis of Indian Ocean politics to the selective policies of Great powers in the non-proliferation regime, touching upon the evolving trajectory in the Pak-US relations, it objectively reviews the pattern of Great power interest based engagement in the Middle East. The volume also offers an insight into the current status, development and the future of CPEC project by taking a holistic view of the Long Term Plan specifically focusing on the Special Economic Zones.

It is hoped that the issue will help readers in staying updated with the current political environment and they will find the analyses useful. The SVI Foresight team invites and highly encourages the contributions from the security and strategic community in form of opinion based short commentaries on contemporary political, security and strategic issues. Any suggestions for further improvements are welcome at our [contact address](#). Please see [here](#) the copy of SVI Foresight electronic journal. You can find us on [Face book](#) and can also access the SVI [website](#).

Senior Research Associate
Syedah Sadia Kazmi

Indian Ocean Politics and Pakistan's Economic Interests

Qura tul Ain Hafeez

The Indian Ocean is among the world's largest oceans. It comprises nearly one-fifth of the entire oceans of the world. In the west of Indian Ocean there lies Africa and Arabian Peninsula while the central Indian Ocean touches its boundaries with India's coastal waters while on its west there stands huge range of Himalayan Mountains. The ocean connects the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia within the broader Asian continent to the east and Europe to the west. Pakistan is also one of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean. Pakistan also claims its share in the Indian Ocean. The economic opportunities and resources compel Pakistan to secure its economic interests in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, the limited lines of land communication in the eastern hemisphere have resultantly increased the importance of the areas attached to the ocean. Trade and commerce are the most critical variables, particularly to the strategic choke points where the Indian Ocean is contiguous to other large bodies of water. Among the important choke points of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Strait of Hormuz and the Mallaca are most the important for some Asian countries, especially for the South Asian region.

Pakistan shares a 990km long coastline located at the heart of the Arabian Sea and is among the major littoral states of Indian Ocean region (IOR) as mentioned above. It has a bulk of marine economic resources in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Its Western coast adjacent to the Gulf makes it strategically substantial by providing shortest sea route to the landlocked Central Asian Republics (CAR's), Afghanistan and Western province of China. Due to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Indian Ocean assumes even greater significance for Pakistan.

Subsequently, to secure its economic interests in the Indian Ocean, recently Pakistan has conducted a successful test of an indigenously-developed submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) 'Babur' having a range of 450km on March 29th, 2018. However, the international media has negatively portrayed this action by Pakistan as a step towards nuclearization. A report by Vox news on April 4th, 2018 says that "The acquirement of nuclear-armed submarines by Pakistan and India has increased the chances of a destructive war between the two countries."

However such criticism holds no weight because actually, that fact is that Pakistan's test of SLCM is nothing but to secure its economic interests in IOR. It is important for Pakistan to maintain the deterrence so that it could secure the options for foreign trade and investments. Securing its economic interests in the IOR is important for Pakistan because almost 97 % of Pakistan's trade is carried out through the port of Karachi, Muhammad Bin Qasim, Gawadar, Pasni, Jiwani, Gadani, and Ormara. Long stretched coastline, and significant harbors provide Pakistan with a location that is ideal for sea-borne trade and commercial activities carried out mostly in foreign ships. Pakistan's role in international navigation, the EEZ and Gwadar port are highly significant for the country's economic development. In

the current power dynamic, China's OBOR initiative and CPEC give momentum to the Indian naval forces to harm Pakistan's interests. CPEC and Gwadar port has the potential to make Pakistan into an economic hub of trade and development which is apparently not acceptable to India. Therefore this situation has also catalyzed India's objective to damage Pakistan's economic vision, acquiring the nuclear triad will provide Pakistan a second strike capability, and it will reduce the threat of total loss and mutually assured destruction. Pakistan has always been following a defensive strategy, and Babur-SLCM is one such effort to essentially stabilize the economy by acquiring defense modernization to deal with economic threats. Moreover, it will prove a more secure and safe environment for the foreign investors because Gwadar is a bridge between east and west. The economic progress of Pakistan through Gwadar and CPEC provides an opportunity to substantially increase the trade between eastern, west Asian, African, Middle Eastern and European countries with Pakistan. Therefore it has become important for Pakistan to protect the sea lanes of communication. Pakistan Defence will best serve to protect Pakistan's Economic Interests in the Indian Ocean and deter India against taking any strict actions against Pakistan.

<http://southasiajournal.net/indian-ocean-politics-and-pakistans-economic-interests/>

The Selective Policy of Great Powers in the Non-Proliferation Regime

Uzge Amer Saleem

The threat of nuclear proliferation varies greatly depending on a country's political relationship with the proliferators— Matthew Kroenig

When the gun is in the hand of a friend we might not feel as threatened as when it is in the hands of a foe. This simple logic applies to the nuclear dynamics as well. When the nukes are in the hands of a state which the other state has friendly relations with they might not be as alarmed but when those same nukes land in the hands of a state with which relationships are strained, it suddenly becomes an international threat. In this regard states tend to overlook two important aspects. The first one is that there are no permanent friends or enemies in international affairs; the second and more important point is that the use of nuclear weapons is the same for all. All states will use it for the same purpose. The only difference in this regard can be of offence and defence.

The most widespread counter argument for nuclear weapons is the article 51 of the United Nations Charter which allows states to take necessary measures for self-defense. So if it is important for India's self-defense to develop nuclear weapons then it is automatically important for Pakistan to build nuclear weapons as well if they deem it vital to their self-defense. The great powers and more importantly the Non-Proliferation regime cannot pick and choose the nukes which are a threat to them and the ones that are not. The nuclear Non-Proliferation regime should stick to its stance and steer clear of any discrimination. Signing deals and making exceptions for one non NPT nuclear weapon state and imposing sanctions on the others does not send out a very just and credible image for the NPR.

USA cannot turn a blind eye to Israel's nuclear program and threaten to bombard North Korea for their program. Similarly sidelining Pakistan for their program and nurturing India's program would compromise the credibility of non-proliferation regime. If anything, Pakistan's efforts are merely a counter measure or rather defensive measures to India's offensive steps in the South Asian region. Unfortunately, even under these obvious circumstances India is somehow considered to be a responsible nuclear state. This is purely because of the biased and tilted approach of USA. Not only is this harmful for the non-proliferation regime but it also clearly means an asymmetric South Asia for Pakistan which gives it all the more reason to take whatever measures are necessary for the security of the state.

The concept is more vividly explained in the Political Friendship Theory. According to the theory great powers feel less threatened from the nuclear programs of states they have friendly ties with however they perceive the nuclear weapons of those states as a greater threat with whom their relations are rather edgy. This is the perfect explanation for the US-Indo nexus in South Asia. USA needs to realize that they are creating an unstable Asia by supporting one nuclear program in the region and discrediting the other.

This discriminatory approach by the non-proliferation regime can actually weaken its credibility because it is clear that the rules for states where great powers have strategic interest are different than what they are for the states where there are contending strategic interests. One is left to wonder whether the nuclear bomb itself is a threat or whether the threat varies from state to state based on how close they are with the major powers calling the shots. If we see it through this lens then it is clear that Pakistan's nuclear program is under the radar only because it does not settle well with the hegemonic minded state next door and the overly skeptical power in the West. Say if Pakistan is to develop cordial relations with the US in the near future or it somehow suddenly becomes important to their strategic interests then in no time Pakistan's nuclear program would be as safe as India's, we would become a responsible nuclear state and all will be well.

The nuclear politics is just a matter of interests and who serves them at what time. These interests change and so do the states serving them. The current cozied up states need to keep an eye open for when the tables turn and they are on the other end. If Pakistan can go from being the major non-NATO ally to being put in the grey list in the near future then it cannot be assured for how long India can enjoy this friendly détente.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/12/the-selective-policy-of-great-powers-in-the-non-proliferation-regime/>

Optical Missile Tracking Systems and Minimum Credible Deterrence

Ahyousha Khan

There was a time in human history when nuclear technology was the “it” technology; no one could imagine anything beyond it. The destruction and wrath it brought was not only terrifying but mesmerizing. It was fascinating for ordinary people, leaders, scientists and states that the smallest particle of matter upon breaking can release energy which could burn down a whole city in seconds. Thus, invention of nuclear weapons changed the way of thinking of nations, states and leaders. Mastering the fission of radioactive atom to enable it to release energy is not a child’s play; states invest billions in currency to make nuclear weapons.

At the operational level, a nuclear weapon requires delivery systems. In this regard, strategic bombers, ships, submarines and missiles are commonly used delivery vehicles by the states. But, one of the most significant and reliable delivery systems is missiles, With missiles, states can launch nuclear payload from their own territory or from any other place without risking its human resource, in case of sending bombers. Missile technology all around the world is growing by leaps and bounds. After nuclearization, both Indian and Pakistan pursued missile technologies including ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, ballistic missile defences, Multiple Independently re-entry targetable vehicles and inter-continental ballistic missiles as well. States invest in nuclear weapons because it helps them achieve deterrence which stops states from using nuclear option due to fear of unacceptable damages to one’s vital interests. However, to endorse credibility of nuclear weapons, states invest in military modernization.

The main objective behind nuclearization of Pakistan was to create deterrence against India but without indulging into arms race. Thus, policy of minimum credible deterrence was developed by Pakistan. Later on, after India’s attempt to exploit the levels beneath nuclear threshold, Pakistan resorted to the policy of full spectrum deterrence without going for arms race. So, to create credible but minimum deterrence at the start of year 2017, Pakistan tested multiple independently reentry targetable vehicle (MIRV), which can deliver multiple nuclear war heads in one go.

Development of MIRV by Pakistan is neither consequence of ambitious national objectives nor is it meant to initiate an arms race in the region. But, it is to make nuclear deterrence viable against India’s BMDs which can intercept incoming ballistic missiles through interceptors and destruct them in the air.

Pakistan, due to its economic restraints could not go for BMD in response to India; as it is an expensive technology that has yet to achieve 100% success rate. So, considering its options, MIRVs came out as the most rational choice. However, MIRVs are one of the most complex technologies in which missile can carry more than one warhead in a single launch and with the capability to hit multiple individual targets. They require technological sophistication in not only sending so many vehicles in one launch but also in yield and most importantly in accuracy. With enough yield and accuracy MIRVs

provide states the capability to go for pre-emptive strikes. Thus, MIRV have the capability to overwhelm the BMD system and resultantly eliminate the false sense of security under which India could go for first strike.

To increase the accuracy of MIRV missiles, Pakistan bought highly sophisticated, large scale optical tracking and measurement system from China. According to national news agency, Pakistan has deployed this sophisticated technology in battlefield. Before Chinese system, Pakistan was utilizing indigenous systems. Nonetheless, it will help Pakistan record high-resolution images of a missile's departure from its launcher, stage separation, tail flame and, after the missile re-enters atmosphere, the trajectory of the warheads it releases. These functions will be possible because the system bought by Pakistan comes with a pair of high-performance telescopes equipped with a laser ranger, high-speed camera, infrared detector and a centralised computer system that automatically captures and follows moving targets. However, what makes this system unique is its ability to detect missile up to range of several hundred kilometers through the help of its telescopes. The timing of these telescopes are precisely synchronized with the atomic clock. Thus, now Pakistan can track different warheads going in different directions simultaneously. Moreover, through visual imagery, the missile developers can improve the accuracy and design of missile in much better way.

So, with this technological uplift, Pakistan will soon add Ababeel (MIRV) into its operational missile inventory. But, these actions by Pakistan are not to give rise to arms race rather they are the reactions to the actions taken by India. BMDs by India never strengthened nuclear deterrence or stability rather they eliminated the deterrence by nulling the credibility of ballistic missiles. As a result, to maintain credibility of its deterrence though minimum means, Pakistan opted for MIRV, as missile tracking systems are essential in improving the accuracy and designs of missiles. If anything indicates arms race in the region, it is India's ICBMs, naval nuclear fleets and space weaponization.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/13042018-optical-missile-tracking-systems-and-minimum-credible-deterrence-oped/>

Negating Nuclear Bluff

Asma Khalid

The war of words between India and Pakistan's militaries prove that both South Asian nuclear states are intertwined in a traditional security competition. Indian Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat, while delivering the annual Army dinner, stated: "We will call the (nuclear) bluff of Pakistan. If we will have to really confront the Pakistanis, and a task is given to us, we are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their nuclear bluff." Such statements of calling the 'nuclear bluff', 'increased cross-border firing by Indian forces, which coupled with the proclamation of surgical strikes can lead to crisis instability in the region.

Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Asif Ghafoor responded to the Indian army chief's 'nuclear bluff' assertion by saying that such statements are unbecoming from a person of a responsible stature. He further stated that "Well, it's their choice. Should they wish to test our resolve they may try and see it for them...Pakistan's credible nuclear deterrence is the only thing stopping India from a war." Such statements by the Indian military officials, and a quick calculated response from Pakistan, have raised the concerns of security analysts regarding the regional security and strategic dynamics.

It could be an appropriate tactic of General Bipin for securing finances for the modernization of the Army, but an absurd and destabilizing statement for the strategic stability in South Asia. According to the analysts, such statements by Indian military officials can lead to crisis instability and force the Pakistan to hasten its evolution towards war fighting nuclear doctrine. Another alarming reality is that General Bipin has failed to realize the repercussions of misreading Pakistan's nuclear weapon capability and too much confidence in India's Cold Start Doctrine. Hence, Pakistan's successful test of the 'submarine-launched cruise missile Babur (SLCM Babur)' can be viewed as a befitting response to India.

According to Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Babur is submarine-launched cruise missile with range of 450 km. It was fired "from an underwater dynamic platform" and "successfully engaged its target with precise accuracy; meeting all ... flight parameters". The development of Babur (SLCM) is a significant component of a "credible second-strike capability" and a step towards reinforcing Pakistan's policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence through self-reliance and indigenization.

Previously, on January 9, 2017, Pakistan conducted its first successful test of indigenously developed submarine launched cruise missile Babur-III. Babur-III is also advanced, mature and indigenously developed series of cruise missiles. The First test of Babur-III was considered by Pakistan's security planners as a major milestone and a right step in right direction towards *reliable second strike capability*. After the successful test of Babur-III, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, while congratulating the nation and the military on the first successful test-fire of the Submarine Launched Cruise Missile stated: "The successful test of Babur-3 is a manifestation of Pakistan's technological progress and self-reliance." He added: "Pakistan always maintains policy of peaceful co-existence but

this test is a step towards reinforcing policy of credible minimum deterrence.” Therefore successful test of Babur-III, submarine launched cruise missile finalized the triad of Pakistan’s nuclear forces and second test of Babar on March 9, 2018 has enhanced Pakistan’s deterrence based on Second Strike Capability.

Another significant factor which forced Pakistan to acquire Second Strike Capability is India’s doctrinal transformation as it is clearly transforming its Nuclear Doctrine. New trends are emerging in India’s nuclear strategy as it is moving towards a ‘first-use’ or even a ‘first-strike nuclear strategy’. India’s nuclear doctrine is based on the ‘strategic ambiguity’, therefore it has been anticipated that India is shifting its nuclear strategy towards ‘counterforce targets’ rather than ‘counter value targets’. The second emerging trend is that India is moving towards the strategy of “First Use” or “Preemptive strike” from the “No-First Use strategy”. The abandoning of no first-use, development of missiles defense shield, fake claims of surgical strikes and calling the nuclear bluff are developments that are perilous for the regional security. Indeed, such events have forced Pakistan to maintain deterrence through qualitative and quantitative developments in nuclear forces. In the strategic landscape of South Asia, the presence of Pakistan’s credible second-strike capability is imperative for the continuity of the strategic stability between/among strategic competitors: India and Pakistan.

Subsequently, harsh statements by Indian military, its shifting nuclear doctrines and maturing sea based/ballistic missile defense developments capabilities are threatening for Pakistan. Such developments by India have been countered by Pakistan by carrying out two tests of nuclear-capable missiles, ‘Babur-3’ submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and ‘Babar’. Pakistan’s tests of SLCM has further reinforced the debate on South Asian maritime security, second-strike capability and missile defense technologies in the regional landscape. To conclude, it’s impossible for the Indians to alter the strategic equilibrium between India and Pakistan. Though Islamabad is not matching the Indian conventional military buildup, yet it is gradually advancing its nuclear arsenal. Hence, Pakistan’s successful test of indigenous Submarine Launched Cruise (SLC) Missile ‘Babur’ has negated India’s desire to call Pakistan’s ‘nuclear bluff’ and has augmented the credibility of Pakistan’s nuclear deterrence strategy. Addition of ‘Babur’ in Pakistan’s military inventory confirms that Pakistan armed forces are prepared to thwart any kind of Indian armed forces military adventurism.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2018/04/13/negating-nuclear-bluff/>

Pakistan-Maldives Growing Relation and Indian Apprehensions

Beenish Altaf

With the growing Chinese and Pakistan's engagement in Maldives, the US and its emerging strategic partner i.e. India, are increasingly getting apprehensive. This brief analysis is with reference to the recent visit of Pakistan's army chief to Maldives. The visit took place during the period of volatile political developments going in Maldives. Geographically, Maldives is located 700 km from the Lakshadweep islands and some 1,200 km from the Indian mainland. Around 97% of India's international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the Indian Ocean, and Maldives is the key littoral state in this region.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) was invited by Maldives National Defence Force Chief Major General Ahmed Shiyam, who very warmly greeted him on arrival at Malé. Gen. Bajwa also met Defence Minister Adam Shareef Umar and called on Maldives' President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. During this historic visit, the two sides discussed the possibility of joint patrol of vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Indian Ocean region. Both the countries are taking steps to boost counter-terrorism cooperation that could assist them in playing a larger role in the Indian Ocean region. The National Counter Terrorism Centre of Maldives, is leading the collaborative efforts with Pakistan under the supervision of the Minister of Defence and National Security. This actually became a serious cause of concern for India, owing to the fact that India and Maldives were already under few such joint commitments.

The key issue that raises alarm for India is the commitment between both friendly states to support Maldives with medical aid, military training and joint patrolling Maldivian EEZ. However, defense cooperation of Pakistan is largely limited to training, port visits and occasional multilateral exercises. It is pertinent to highlight that Maldives has declined an invitation by India to send a ministerial-level delegation to the Defence Expo, a biannual exhibition of weapons and military hardware, (this week, mid April 2018). India has also invited China for the Defence Expo but there hasn't been any response from Beijing either.

The decision by Maldives is seen apparently as a snub to New Delhi, which became a worrisome development, where Pakistan and Maldives are growing closer on the other hand. From diplomatic sources it is indicated that India is curiously investigating the discussion that two sides held regarding the joint patrolling of Maldivian territory. Indian official indicated that if that is true then joint patrol between two states (Maldives and Pakistan naval force) would be redlining for them.

A large portion of Maldives'EEZ is contiguous to Indian territorial waters. Previously, India and Maldives conducted joint patrols of its EEZ that covers around 900,000 sq km. Indian naval assets often provide support to Maldives for surveillance of their EEZ through both; surface and air. In 2016 anMoU between India and Maldives on defense cooperation was in process to setting up a coastal surveillance radar system for real time surveillance of EEZ of Maldives. India's aircraft named is Dornier, is often seen as undertaking surveillance of Maldives EEZ. India is assisting the surveillance of EEZ of not just

Maldives, but also Indian Ocean and a number of other countries of Indian Ocean Island like Mauritius and Seychelles.

Relationship of Indian Ocean's maritime neighbors stressed on 1st February 2018 after the Indian suggestion to Maldives to implement the Supreme Court order that led Yameen declare a state of emergency in the country. Maldives opposition leader and former President asked India to make a military show of force to pressurize Yameen's government for more political space in run-up to presidential election in the same year.

Likewise, China is investing in Maldives and the oceans around. In the midst of allegations of China engaging in massive land grabbing in the Maldives, the Pentagon said it was a cause of concern for the US also along with India. During Gen. Bajwa's visit to Maldives, a statement from Indian top official mentioned that "As usual, the current Maldivian regime remain secretive about the dealings with Chinese and Pakistani's unlike previous governments which took us into confidence in advance on such issues." Nevertheless, the situation and on-going developments in Maldives is a cause of concern for India and the US both. Therefore, this is the best time for Pakistan to utilize the gaps created, and fill them with its presence, that would eventually increase is regional trust and status.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2018/04/13/pakistan-maldives-growing-relation-indian-apprehensions/>

How John Bolton as NSA would Impact Pakistan?

Ubaid Ahmed

Despite the triumphs Pakistan has had in curbing terrorism, the NSA John Bolton doesn't believe that Pakistan is internally strong enough to thwart an assumed Islamist takeover of the state.

President Trump on March 23rd announced in a tweet that he was removing H.R. McMaster from his post of National Security Advisor and that John Bolton would take over on April 9, 2018. In any event, President Trump's arrangements of Mike Pompeo and Gina Haspel, to head the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) respectively, aren't sufficient of an omen, appointing John Bolton as the new National Security Advisor (NSA) solidifies that his foreign policy is going to wind up more forcefully than ever. Bolton will fill in as Trump's third advisor after Michael Flynn and Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster.

Moreover, Bolton is one of the supposed 'many people' who believe that Pakistan's security agencies are under Islamists' influence, a suspicion that then manages the US narrative on Pakistan which resultantly paints Pakistan not as a 'non-NATO' ally but rather as an adversary; the main cause behind its failure in Afghanistan.

The Bolton account, as is apparent, fits pleasantly into India's worldwide pro-terrorist projections of Pakistan. Not only will it add to Pakistan's long list of issues at the international level, for example, the threat of being blacklisted by FATF, in addition it will be instrumental in tilting the regional balance of power in favor of India.

Moreover, it is clear that John Bolton thinks differently about China-Pak ties, as he believes that the US may end up gifting Pakistan to China if the US keeps on putting excessive pressure on Pakistan to do more. He rather suggests in his article for the Wall Street Journal, that the US should utilize its leverage on China to induce Pakistan to 'sever ties with terrorists and close their sanctuaries. The Trump administration should make it clear that Beijing will face consequences if it does not realize its massive interests in support of this goal.'

Unmistakably John Bolton, particularly like President Trump, needs to squeeze Pakistan; however, he wouldn't like to do as such by forcing sanctions on Pakistan or by removing the military aid. Rather, his approach is to take action by utilizing India in its strategy of isolating Pakistan and by pressing its significant partner, China.

And whilst John Bolton doesn't rely on pushing Pakistan too hard, the reason isn't that he understands of Pakistan's triumphs and forfeits but since he thinks pushing too hard would actualize Pakistan's assumed control by the terrorist outfits. In an interview given in August last year, he stated: 'If you push Pakistan too hard, this government in Pakistan is fragile. It has been since the partition of British India. The military in Pakistan itself is at risk, increasingly, of being infiltrated through the officer

ranks by radical Islamists. Many people believe the intelligence services unit already is heavily dominated by Islamists.'

In a nutshell South Asia is in a critical need for a careful approach and policy reevaluation from the US government. Be that as it may, if there is one individual with the ability to keep away from disaster, it is simply the President himself. Regardless of whether President Trump has the will to persuade his new team to take part in diplomacy over war-plotting, yet remains to be seen. It is, in this manner, up to Islamabad to ponder the most significant reaction to the possible outcome. Pakistan may only be able to neutralize Bolton's hostility by drawing him into tactful diplomacy. Any other plans to the contrary, including reciprocating that animosity, are probably going to backfire.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/13/how-john-bolton-as-nsa-would-impact-pakistan/>

The Emerging Troika and the Syrian Conflict: Is there any other way than the military option to regain the lost influential position in this conflict?

Nisar Ahmed

As Donald Trump mulls over the multiple options regarding withdrawal of the US troops from Syria after what he believed the singular objective of defeating ISIL has been achieved, a new troika comprising of Russia, Turkey and Iran is increasingly gaining strength in order to fill the void left by the US and its western allies. Such claim of premature victory invites some critical questions regarding the US' capability and intention to shape the future of Syria by containing the interests of each country forming this troika namely Russia, Iran and Turkey.

To be sure, the interests of each member constituting this Troika are simultaneously divergent but they also converge at the critical junctures of Syrian territorial integrity. While Iran and Russia back the Bashar-Al Assad regime, Turkey has been staunch opponent and critic of Assad since the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011. Nevertheless, by effect of the sharing of the central converging point of Syria's territorial integrity, the troika countries have managed rather successfully to keep the dialogue channels open and make ceaseless efforts for the realisation of de-escalation zones in parts of Syria.

In such sophisticated play of divergence and convergence, the Astana Talks provided an opportunity for all the three countries to not only curtail the widening of differences and escalation of conflicts on the Syrian battle ground but also provide a frame work and hope for a geographically contiguous Syria. In this context, the central question is how the US and its allies would react to these developments wherein the Troika is increasingly replacing them?

What are the potential trajectories of the response of the US and allies? Above all, is there any other way except the military option to regain the lost influential position in this conflict?

Since the very beginning of this Syrian conflict, the US along with its allies has exhausted virtually all options except a full fledged ground invasion with their own armies. The central objective of this unfolding development has been regime change since the outset. First, with a sophisticated operation of public relations a dissent was manufactured. Subsequently, they arm the so called Syrian opposition with state of the art weapons and capabilities to counter the Syrian regime forces. However, their central investment was on People's Protection Units (YPG), mainly-Kurdish militia in Syria. The master plan was to carve out a chunk of territory from parts of Syria and Iraq inhabited by Kurdish ethnicity and subsequently forge a state for Kurds in order to ensure the Zionist regime-Israel's security.

As the events unfolded, the plan for Syria started to crumble due to multiple factors. One of the most important factors was the waning influence of the US in different regions of the world. Such opportunity was pounced by the Russia along with Iran. Turkey, which initially put its weight behind this plan, later came to realise the folly and danger involved in such a course of action. The fear that haunted

Turkey was, if a geographical contiguous Kurdish homeland is to be carved out of the territory of Iraq and Syria, then where is the guarantee that Turkish Kurds will not seek to join their brothers in their own Kurdish homeland. Such reality-check and subsequent long term empirical implications of the situation proved to be the Turkish nightmare as the US started to arm and train the different Kurdish militias on the borders of Turkey.

Iran is sensitive about the historical religious shrines in Syria along with a considerable size of the Shia minority in Syria. The Russian Federation is concerned about the rising tide of the radicalism and international terrorism in the Islamic world. Its primary concern is the non-state actors and their acts of sabotage in case where the traditional entities of state fail. Since sizeable states of Muslim population reside along the immediate borders of Russia, its concerns regarding the rising tide of international terrorism cannot be overstated.

Therefore, these divergent interests of the Troika lead us toward their singular converging point that Syria must come out from this civil war as a sovereign state with her intact historical borders. Now the important question is: is there any possibility for the US and allies to dismantle this historic geographic integrity of the Syria without directly demonstrating their military might? The answer to this question involves the current state of the events in which the US has almost declared a war on Syria via Twitter.

Following the reported incident of the chemical attacks in Syria which have not been corroborated by any independent investigative body as of now, in their usual conduct of affairs, the US has put Syrian regime and its international backers on hold for their missiles which are “new” and “smart” to quote Trump. Russia and Syrian government vehemently deny such an incident ever took place and have invited the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to investigate allegations of a chemical attack in the eastern Ghouta town of Douma.

This series of the events give us a clue to our question which states that the current situation in Syria has reached the boiling point wherein the actors have been exhausted by the attrition they have inflicted upon one another over the years. The conclusion of the situation is not far away. In such circumstances, an exercise of the military might from the different players is imminent which does not exclude nuclear sabre rattling. Leaving aside the nature, caliber, and canvass of the conflict, a low level of the mutual-demonstration of the military might warrants in order to secure the relative gains of the engaging players.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/228482/the-emerging-troika-and-the-syrian-conflict/>

Babur Missile Test: Pakistan Validating its Second-Strike Capability

Ahyousha Khan

In March 2018, Pakistan test fired its indigenous submarine launched cruise missile named Babur-3. It was the second test of Babur-3 after the first missile test in January 2017. The missile was fired from submersible platform off the Pakistani coast and successfully met all the test parameters. Pakistan's sea launched cruise missile has a range of 450 kilometers and can carry conventional and nuclear warheads. Babur 3 uses air-water controlled propulsion, advanced guidance/navigation system and is designed to eject horizontally through submarine torpedoes rather than vertically through cannisterised vertical launch systems. With vertical launch systems it is impossible to keep weapons in dissembled form but with horizontal launch system Pakistan has made this option possible for itself. Thus, the test of Babur-3 is essential in journey towards credible 2nd strike capability. Up till now, Pakistan has not revealed as to which submarine will be used to launch Babur-3 but there is some information available regarding the options which can be used including Augusta 90-B or Chinese type 039 A, which Pakistan is procuring. Augusta 90-B series is originally a French technology, and is currently in use by Pakistan. Augusta series is a diesel powered submarine but it works on air propulsion and has the capacity to stay in water for three weeks. Benefit of using diesel powered submarine, which works on air propulsion is that it causes low frequency waves consequently is harder to trace down.

In South Asia, massive militarization and nuclearization of India was the compelling factor for Pakistan to develop 2nd strike capability. Development of SLCM was the reaction to the provocative and offensive Indian policies rather than ambitious choices by Pakistan. Fusion of strategic triad with dream of blue water navy is destabilizing not only for South Asian stability but also for whole Indian Ocean. Another contributing factor in Pakistan's pursuit of 2nd strike capability is India's shifting nuclear doctrine in which splendid first strike or preemptive strikes figure as one of the important factors. Although, Pakistan has always believed that India's declaratory nuclear doctrine is different from its actual policies but, initially right after independence India lacked the naval power base to fulfill its hegemonic ambitions. However, now with its indigenously built fleets of SSBN, SSNs, air craft carriers, K4 missiles, K15 missiles and designated naval satellites to enable intelligence, communication and reconnaissance have provided India with sufficient military might in Indian Ocean.

For Pakistan, sole purpose of nuclearization lies in creating nuclear deterrence that could lead to strategic stability vis-à-vis India. However, deterrence is a continuous process which requires validation from time to time in face of changing policies, doctrines and technologies. In South Asia, it became that Test of Babur-3 in March was an attempt by Pakistan to validate its 2nd strike capability. After first test of SLCM Babur-3, India was of the view that this is a nuclear bluff and its military establishment believed that Pakistan was bluffing which India could easily call any time. Thus, by validating the 2nd strike capability, Pakistan negated India's claim of nuclear bluff. As for Pakistan, unlike India, nuclear weapons and deterrence acquired through them are the matter of its survival not prestige.

Issue faced by Pakistan regarding second strike capability is survivability of the warheads designated for the task. Thus, nuclear powered submarines that have capability to stay submersed for more than half a year, are preferred choice in making second strike more credible. At the moment, Pakistan does not have nuclear powered submarine, which is expensive yet very crucial in maintaining credible second-strike capability. So, for credible second-strike capability, Pakistan will be venturing into nuclear powered submarine. But, so far Indian threat is countered through the second-strike capability based on cruise missiles. In longer run, to protect its interest in Indian Ocean, Pakistan needs strong navy that is indigenous in naval capabilities including ships, submarines and missiles.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/27/babur-missile-test-pakistan-validating-its-second-strike-capability/>

China's Boao Forum for Asia and Economic Integration through CPEC

Qura tul Ain Hafeez

These days the “Asian Competitiveness Annual Report 2018” has become talk of the town, which says that BRI's flagship project i.e. CPEC) is now being extended towards Afghanistan. The same was highlighted during China's Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) annual conference that was held on April 11, 2018. China has planned to extend USD 50 billion under CPEC to Afghanistan. Surely this is a good step for promoting regional economic integration because this fresh and more advanced foreign policy is chiefly motivated by comprehensive geostrategic goals. Moreover it will strengthen the CPEC as a brand in the realm of International Political Economy. Not only this corridor will link Kashgar-Xinjiang in China's remote west with the Port of Gwadar in the province of Baluchistan, this will also assume the harbor's closeness to the Middle East and Persian Gulf. It could be used as a transshipment plug for China's energy deliveries removing the requirement to go through the Passage of Malacca in Southeast Asia. One of the primary advantages of extending CPEC to Afghanistan is that it will offer large geo-strategic openings for Pakistan thus making Pakistan further eye-catching for an extensive diversity of global players. Moreover, CPEC through Afghanistan will eventually permit Russia and the landlocked states of Central Asian Republics (CAR's) to further increase trade activity through the bigger Indian Ocean, thus leading to the formation of formerly unexplored economic means which will revitalize every one and generate revenue for transportation for Pakistan

However it's obvious that all the actors in CPEC are concerned with reaping benefit out of this game-changing economic project. India, as usual has protested to China over CPEC and acts as a major stumbling block in India-China relations. Since China does not have a reliable passage to the Indian Ocean; CPEC will unlock an extensive variety of routes for China and its trade ally i.e. Pakistan.

The supreme possible advantage of expanding CPEC will provide progress in Pakistan's industrial sector. Pakistan's industrial goods and products are expected to be generally adapted in One Belt One Road (OBOR) participatory states.

Now here comes the most important question that needs to be addressed. The question is whether CPEC's rival will accept Pakistan to become the hub of trade and economic activities. The CPEC comprises all the feature through which it could fetch economic avenues to Pakistan and can foster regional and cross regional economic and trade integration between South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and West Asia. However, CPEC is confronted by some serious substantial hindrances ranging from India's opposition, regional security environment, and internal instability to political discontent among various political actors in the Pakistani polity. There is a need to address these above mentioned challenges because expanding CPEC to Afghanistan will cause certain security issues as well. Afghanistan's internal political instability, terrorism, separatism and extremism, are the issues that may collectively prevent the economic activities to be easily and freely carried out. There must be some kind

of confidence building measures between the governments which should give definite security assurance to the participating states. However apart from these security concern (which must not be ignored) the outcome of this extensive economic policy will be more beneficial. Once there is an economic boost in place it will help remove evils as well. Because In order to boost the economic activities all the states will take strict measures to assure a secure and terrorism free environment keeping in mind the mutual benefits of each other.

Pakistan's business community should also play an active role in successful materialization of CPEC especially when it is planned to be extended towards Afghanistan. This will further strengthen the all-weather strategic partnership between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. CPEC is of immense importance for a land locked country like Afghanistan. It could facilitate Afghanistan reduce its reliance on foreign aid and act as a stabilizing factor to counter the negative fallout of Indian influence in Afghanistan thus boosting economic activities by putting its fragile economy on a sound footing.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/28/chinas-boao-forum-for-asia-and-economic-integration-through-cpec/>

The Significance of Nuclear Information Sharing in South Asia

Asma Khalid

The regional competitive environment of South Asia has fueled the diplomatic tension and security anxieties between India and Pakistan. Both countries share a history of hostile relations which have been strained by some historical and political issues. Due to prioritization of security concerns of regional states, South Asia is undergoing a nuclear and conventional arms modernization. However, the inception of nuclear weapons in South Asia has not only maintained the deterrence stability in the region but at the same time instigated the nuclear and missile arms race in the region. Thus under such circumstances, in the aftermath of Indian and Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, Pakistan proposed the establishment of Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) to India for durable peace in South Asia. But unfortunately India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee rejected Pakistan's proposal of Strategic Restraint Regime. Later on 21, December 1988, a bilateral agreement was signed between India and Pakistan, known as "Agreement between India and Pakistan on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities." Under this agreement, the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the government of the Republic of India, have agreed on nuclear-related information sharing to maintain durable peace and the development of friendly and harmonious bilateral relations.

The significance of Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) in South Asia

In February 2016, in response to India's growing conventional and strategic weapons' development in the region, Pakistan's officials re-emphasized on the desire to establish the Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR) in South Asia". Now the question arises as to why is SRR so important for the region??

Strategic restraint Regime is significant due to its three inter-connecting elements: First, nuclear restraint to maintain deterrence stability; second, conventional arms balance; third, for conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The primary objective of Strategic Restraint Regime is to prevent a nuclear arms race in the region as India-Pakistan relations have been dominated by the action-reaction syndrome. Strategic Restraint regime would be helpful in maintaining strategic and deterrence stability and accelerating the peace process in the region. The regime can be employed to build trust between India and Pakistan, and resultantly avert the chances of conflict escalation. It may include any sign of peace initiative to a treaty. By effective implementation of strategic Restraints, both states will be able to take their decisions more confidently in a less hostile and more stable environment.

It is unfortunate that despite the efforts by Pakistan', India has emerged as the largest arms importer of the world in 2018. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report of 2018, with 14% global arms imports, India is world's largest arms importer. Hence it is evident that the objective of SRR has not yet been achieved due to two factors: first; India's intention to emerge as a regional power, second; due to the role of external powers like the United States and Russia. India's co-operation in conventional and nuclear fields with United States and Russia especially Indo-US civil

nuclear deal and 2008 waiver for Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), membership of Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG) has undermined the objectives of SRR as well as disturbed the balance of power (BOP) in the region.

The significance of Non-attack Agreement between India-Pakistan

Under the agreement of “Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities,” India and Pakistan have been annually sharing information about the locations of their nuclear installations and facilities for thirty years. Under this agreement, both states are bound to violate the agreement of information shared. This agreement is significant as information sharing may have had a stabilizing effect on the tense bilateral relations.

The Agreement does not cover nuclear delivery assets such as missiles, planes submarines, and vehicles, etc. which would be subject to counter force threat by either side. It would be wise for each side to continue to keep deterrent nuclear assets outside the zones covered by the coordinates of its nuclear installations and facilities.

However this is still debatable as in the event of major war or clash, no agreement including the non-attack agreement would be held sacrosanct. Though due to deterrence equilibrium, it is considered that neither side would go for “first to strike” at the others nuclear facilities and that if deterrence fails, then it would lead to Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD).

Nuclear Information Sharing: Challenges, Analysis, Conclusion

India is reluctant to Pakistan’s proposal of Strategic Restraint Regime. At the same time when it comes to nuclear information sharing, India has maintained its non-cooperative behavior. Pakistan has shared information related to its nuclear security practices to allay international concerns. However, agreement of exchange of list of nuclear installation can be considered as a significant step.

Both South Asian countries have overarching and continuing stakes in not targeting each other’s nuclear installations or facilities. Additionally, both countries would want to avoid the universal international opprobrium that would result in any such action. The coordinates of nuclear installations and facilities are exchanged on the first day of the New Year since the agreement was signed. It is a welcome trend that the agreement continues to be followed despite ups and downs in bilateral relations and periods of tension. One hopes further nuclear CBMs are negotiated and put in place.

To conclude, to address the regional security issues and negative impacts of the arms race, Pakistan has been demanding nuclear and conventional restraints. In this regard, India’s acceptance of Pakistan’s proposals, Nuclear Confidence Building Measures (NCBMs), economic progress and continued effective diplomacy can open the ways to a nuclear information sharing and strategic restraint arrangements between India and Pakistan to maintain deterrence stability in the region.

<http://southasiajournal.net/the-significance-of-nuclear-information-sharing-in-south-asia/>

Why Does India Want More Presence in Afghanistan?

Uzge Amer Saleem

The enemy of an enemy is always a friend. In our field of study this can be termed as a strategic partner or an ally. That is the sort of relationship India is trying to build with Afghanistan. Our next door neighbor in the West is India's dream 'backdoor entrance' into Pakistan. How ideal would it be for the Indians to manipulate the Afghan-Pakistan situation to their favor by buying the Afghan loyalty and using it against their one true enemy. However, unfortunately for India, we do not live in Narnia and things are not as magically easy as they would want them to be. The situation might seem to be in favor of the Indians at present since they have managed to build cordial relations with Afghanistan but it can't be understated that an Afghanistan minus Pakistan is not possible.

Let's take a step back and discuss things objectively. There is no doubt about the fact that there is only one thing common amongst the otherwise divided Afghan government and that is their blame for Pakistan. They blame us for their problems. These allegations are obviously baseless but that is something to be discussed in another debate. Right now the aspect that needs to be focused on is that the Indians have no brotherly affiliation or cultural proximity with the Afghans unlike Pakistan. They are merely trying to use their land as a playground for their massacre intended for Pakistan. Undoubtedly they are smart about it as we all know strategic planning with a hint of negativity is a part of India's skill set and they feel no shame in using it anywhere and everywhere. Their \$200 million aid to be spread over the future five years is not a step to help Afghanistan stand up on its own feet in terms of education, infrastructure, health and other aspects of a state. This is actually their attempt to have a more dependent state that runs to India in all times of need. One can simply not ignore the wish of their Godfather and the Afghani's will be no exception.

They blame Pakistan for using their land in war to gain favors from the Americans but the question is that why love India when that is exactly what they are doing as well? India is only strengthening Afghanistan up to the extent where it is stable enough to be used and manipulated against Pakistan. Yes they are investing in their institutions in the present scenario but that is only so that they can reap what they sow in the past. There is one single reason why India wants more presence in Afghanistan, to threaten Pakistan from both sides when the time comes. It seems like all of India's military and conventional strategies seem to be revolving around Pakistan's lack of strategic depth. Their self-declared victory bound Cold Start Doctrine and their other regional pursuits like this venture in Afghanistan all revolves around the single advantage they have and that is Pakistan's narrow territory. What they don't realize is that this can and will be used in our favor as well when the time demands it.

However, despite India's wishes and hopes there are some important factors that cannot be avoided when talking about the Pak-Indo-Afghan triangle. One of the major factors here is the ethnic, cultural and religious similarities that Afghanistan and Pakistan share. The Pashtun element between the two states is very strong and although India tries its ultimate best to manoeuvre this situation and highlight the aspect in negative light to create a rift between the two states and their people, this is not an easy goal to achieve. Pakistan and Afghanistan go long back and where it must be admitted that there is a certain degree of bitter taste and scepticism between the two states but that is something that can be solved through dialogue and other diplomatic channels. Given all of that the only hurdle or might we say the only force stopping this from happening is the neighbor next door with rapidly growing hegemonic ambitions. They are willing to compromise the security and stability of the region to achieve their selfish desires and this is the only reason why they want more presence in Afghanistan.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/29/why-does-india-want-more-presence-in-afghanistan/>

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Iran Triad and Israel

Nisar Ahmed

Historically Pakistan sought to maintain the policy of neutrality or balance between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this regard, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy long term strategic ties backed by various economic, defence and military to military cooperation agreements, not to mention the religious affinities that underscore these ties. To be sure, Pakistan has also been very conscious of Iran's genuine concerns when it comes to managing its ties with Saudi Arabia and at the same time has been making great strides in enhancing the spectrum of cooperation with Iran. Pakistan's refusal to accept Saudi request to send troops to the costly Yemen war is usually taken as an important example of Pakistan's commitment to the policy of neutrality. At present, the complexity of the triad has further been increased by Saudi-Israeli growing rapprochement. Thus, in order to understand the dynamics and the future trajectory of the triad and Pakistan's role in it, an important element that needs careful consideration and study is Saudi-Israeli growing cordiality and their perception of the changing dynamics on the conflict ridden geo-political landscape of the Middle East.

The triad countries i.e. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan have no formal diplomatic relations with Israel. Their opposition to the state of Israel in Palestine largely stems from religious, humanitarian and legal considerations and the fact that the Israeli occupation forces have left many Palestinians homeless in their own home through illegal settlements, brutal use of force and territorial expansion. Not only the 1967 Arab-Israeli war but the recent US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in manifestation of a major departure from traditional US approach to the issue and violation of relevant UN resolutions do not provide adequate reasons for Arab Muslim world and Pakistan to look for any cordial ties with Israel either.

Paradoxically, despite being the 'Guardian' of Islam's two holy mosques and a long champion of Palestine cause, Saudi ruling elite in recent times have become more overt and accommodative in their dealings with Israel or for that matter the US among others on Palestine issue. The general view about this development is that Saudi Arabia seeks modernization and diversification on economic and defence front. Saudi de facto ruler and Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman's move to de-link religion from politics by affording more personal freedoms to the citizens explains this pragmatism.

Indeed, his assertive regional policy has led the kingdom into seemingly intractable competition for power and influence in the region with the other regional giant Iran in Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon etc. Thus, in the absence of any considerable indigenous military industrial base and prowess, Saudi Arabia is compelled to look for multiple partners and options to sustain its influence at a time when the geopolitical landscape of Middle East witnesses declining hegemony of the long term ally i.e. the US and rising influence of Russia and Iran. As a result, Saudi Arabia considers cooperation with Israel a logical response in the light of its capacity for providing hi-tech military hardware to Saudi Arabia not to mention its enmity towards regional antagonist Iran and influence in the US policy making circles.

As for Pakistan and Iran, there are no prospects of good relations with Israel in the near future at least. This presents a stark picture in the light of current trends in Saudi-Israel relations indicating that the two countries have gone a long way to establish various channels of interaction and cooperation overtly or covertly to gain mutual interests.

The foremost reason that drives Saudi Arabia and Israel closer together is no doubt remains their shared threat perception of Iran. In recent times, Iran appears to have prevailed in various theatres of conflicts including in Syria where it backs Bashar al Assad regime along with Russia. Both Saudi-Arabia and Israel consider Iran's growing influence in the region as a severe blow to security and strategic interests. The two countries are also reported to have been in cooperation to contain Iran's rising influence through intelligence sharing. Statements of various Saudi and Israeli officials are testament to this fact. Indeed, by gaining a level of working relation with Saudi Arabia, Israel seeks to concretize its occupation of Palestine while at the same time continuing with its atrocious policies against the Palestinians.

In this complex web of things, Pakistan is confronted with a delicate situation. Because Pakistan's perception of Israel is not only shaped by the latter's abominable treatment of Palestinians but also by its strategic ties with Pakistan's arch rival India and the US. Keeping these facts in view, if we are to assume a conflict situation involving Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel, Pakistan's policy of balance between Iran and Saudi Arabia comes under considerable strain. This inevitably has some implications for Pakistan's policy of balance and creates strategic anxiety in Islamabad.

Therefore, keeping in view this background it is established that Pakistan's policy of balance in the turbulent region of Middle East is increasingly under threat owing to the implicit Saudi overtures to Israel. In this context, Pakistan should keep its dialogue channels open to all sides.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/04/29/pakistan-saudi-arabia-iran-triad-and-israel/>

Pak-US Relations and a Glimmer of Hope

Ubaid Ahmed

President Trump began the year with a Twitter message accusing Pakistan of deceit and lies. Nevertheless, United States was one of the first allies Pakistan had since its inception but both the countries had somewhat fraught relations for more than 30 years.

Starting from 1980s, the US gave arms and funding to Pakistan which was then used to train the Afghan Mujahideen who fought the 'big bear' in Afghanistan. Later in the 1990s, the Afghan-Soviet War ended, and the US withdrew from the region, thus leaving Pakistan in a betrayal. Then in the early 1990s, Pakistan's nuclear device was in the limelight which prompted the burden of sanctions and embargoes by the US on Pakistan.

The real change in the outlook, however, occurred after the September 11 attacks in 2001, after which the US called on Pakistan to join its Global War on Terror (GWOT) in Afghanistan, that too without offering many choices to Pakistan as the then President Bush avowed 'either with us or against us'. Pakistan joined hands with the US in its Global War on Terror and assisted the US in return for military and security aid.

Undoubtedly Pakistan paid a hefty cost for its help in the US-led War on Terror and in the mid-2000s where Pakistan battled hard with the Taliban insurgency and revolts on its soil. Then again in the waning years of Obama administration, the US charged and accused Pakistan of professedly giving safe havens to the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network and consequently withheld the aid.

The current scenario in a way is no less than the continuation of the policies of Obama administration with significantly a more grounded talk and a more resolute spotlight on the Haqqanis. There is no defying of the fact that to win the war in Afghanistan; the US needs Pakistan not only for the supply routes but also to negotiate an enduring political arrangement and peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan-US relations at present are at a low point and are unlikely to improve since both the nations are devoid of trust, and it could even exacerbate in the short term if the Trump administration continued the same 'do more' mantra coupled with the cuts in the aid with further actions like declaring it a state sponsoring terrorism or in any event diplomatically isolating it.

However, the long-strained relations since President Trump assumed office between Pakistan and the US are now heading in a better direction. The Pakistan-US relations see a positive curve after the recent visit of the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Alice Wells to Pakistan on April 9 on. Though not overwhelmingly positive yet the visit was a glimmer of hope for an otherwise fraught relationship between the two countries. The US diplomat has acknowledged Pakistan's efforts in eradicating terrorism from its soil and also highlighted the critical role Pakistan can play in bringing peace to the region in general and Afghanistan in particular. Noting Pakistan's remarkable efforts against terrorism and also the fact that Pakistan itself is the biggest victim, the diplomat asserted that 'I always say that terrorists who attack Pakistan are also enemies of the United

States. We have an agenda, we believe we have shared interests, and Pakistan has a stake in a stable Afghanistan’.

To conclude, the relationship could improve further if the US seeks to develop a more pragmatic and long-haul relationship with Pakistan’s civilian government also along with the military.

<http://southasiajournal.net/pak-us-relations-and-a-glimmer-of-hope/>

The Problems with Non-Proliferation Regime

Beenish Altaf

For the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the preparatory committee is scheduled to hold its second session from April 23 to May 4 at the United Nations Office in Geneva. The prospects for the next review conference do not look particularly bright owing to the fact that Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) member states' fail to reach to a consensus point on how to progress on non-proliferation and disarmament measures individually or institutionally. Similarly the fear about the future of the regime is a continual dilemma globally.

Even though, the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 apparently represents the strong will of the majority of signatory states to work on creating a non-proliferation regime that makes the cost of non-compliance high enough to deter potential violators. In the last Review Conference of 2015, the Signatories met to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, but could not come to an agreement. The question of why the 2015 RevCon could not produce a workable concrete document for the adherence to nuclear non-proliferation regime should be taken into account critically.

Andrey Baklitsky narrates the reasons for the NPT Rev Con's failure to produce any final document in his article titled "The 2015 NPT Review Conference and the Future of the Nonproliferation Regime." First, concluding the NPT RevCon without an agreement is nothing unusual. Since 1970, when the treaty entered into force, the parties could not reach a multilateral consensus at four of the last nine RevCons: 1980, 1990, 2005, and 2015. Indeed, this is a poor record for a treaty that is considered to be a universal treaty.

The conclusion of 2015 NPT RevCon is assessed to be disappointing because it could not wrap-up into a final document especially in the field of non-proliferation. On the other hand, even though the implementation is still debatable, the 2000 and 2010 review conferences are considered to be successful as they agreed on two concrete documents: 13 "practical steps" and the 64-point action plan RevCon in 2000 and 2010 NPT respectively. Secondly, since 1985, the outcome of NPT review conferences has not been changed much. The world order changed from the bipolar world and also a few countries got nuclearized by conducting their nuclear weapon tests, that is, Pakistan, India and North Korea, but the focus of attention of the NPT RevCon remained on the Article VI of the treaty related to disarmament. On the other hand the blazing issue of the creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone free (NWFZ) in the Middle East that was debated a lot in the 2015 NPT review Conference remained a subject of concern since 1974. Third, it is evaluated in the NPT RevCon that both countries, Russia and the US still criticize each other over the suspected disobedience of the international agreements despite implementing few arms control agreements, e.g., the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. There is another positive sign that Moscow and Washington also continue to work together in the P5 process.

Talking about the disarmament initiative, the contemporary situation of Russia and the US initiatives is assessed as follows. The point of concern is Russia's apprehensions on the reduction of

nuclear warheads from their countries (the US and Russia) to 1000 warheads (as announced in international reports) apiece. Since with regards to strategic stability between both countries, a precondition to reduce or cut down the number of nuclear warheads, Russia apprehends that the US is violating or undermining its commitment of reducing nukes by developing prompt global-strike systems, expanding its ballistic missile defense and opposing the draft treaty banning weapons in outer space. So, for initiating the disarmament talks again whether bilateral or multilateral, one needs to employ new inter-governmental dynamics or make use of creative diplomacy; this would positively be an add on from the non-proliferation perspective too.

The international non-proliferation regime has not only been inadequate in dealing with instances of proliferation, but also undermined the objectives of the Article IV of the NPT on transfer of nuclear technology for exclusively peaceful purposes. Lack of consensus at the NPT review conference is hardly new, but the willingness to cooperate or reconcile differences and find consensus is fading. As a result, states that cannot find satisfaction from this forum are beginning to look towards other alternatives to fulfill their disarmament and non-proliferation demands.

There have been suggestions to shift non-proliferation discussions that make decisions by majority instead of consensus reached by the United Nation General Assembly or other ad hoc body. Leaving the outcome aside whether such a move would result in the desired change or not, it would definitely weaken the NPT review process and consequently the nonproliferation regime itself. Despite any short-comings of the 2015 review conference, no other nuclear disarmament arrangement has made substantial progress in restraining the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was drafted in 2017 but unfortunately it too could not gain much momentum in this regard. It too is in the need of recognition by all the nuclear weapons states but the chances of that are quite bleak for at least in the near future. However, progress over the next NPT RevCon will be crucial for the permanence of this treaty.

<https://nation.com.pk/30-Apr-2018/the-problems-with-non-proliferation-regime>