



VISION

VISIONARY INSIGHTS INTO THE STRATEGIC INQUESTS OF NATIONS

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Compiled & Edited by:
S. Sadia Kazmi

Strategic Vision Institute
Islamabad

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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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.

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Editor's Note

The fast shifting regional and global realities, the consequent responses and readjustment of relations among the states, and the re-evaluation of their policies vis a vis each other, warrants a close scrutiny of the national, regional and global strategic and political dynamics simultaneously. This is what the electronic journal for the month of May brings to its readers, i.e. an all inclusive and insightful anthology of opinion based short commentaries by the SVI research associates, deliberating upon a range of contemporary strategic and security issues having close relevance to Pakistan.

The geopolitical and maritime ambitions of India are exceedingly on the rise and are extending out to Indian Ocean, where it is seeking to develop a sea based leg of nuclear triad. These developments, being a real source of direct threat for Pakistan's national and regional security, have been covered profoundly in one of the opinion articles included in the issue. The author rightly believes that India's quest for power and indulgence into arms procurement undermines the regional stability. Another opinion article included contends that the nuclearization of Indian Ocean is although being claimed to be against China, is in fact leading to a security dilemma where Pakistan is forced into responding in kind. The strategy of minimal deterrence by Pakistan is what has managed to keep the regional balance intact so far.

Another article delves deeper into the South Asian regional security landscape and critically analyzes the prevailing pattern of rivalries. An erudite discussion on the Afghanistan problem, the Indian factor and the closely linked stakes of Pakistan, China and the US, reveals that all the stakeholders are aggressively seeking to look after their own interests and if Pakistan wants to make CPEC a reality, it should work out a plan to mend its relations with not just its neighbors but with the major powers too. In the same vein another opinion looks into the recent standoff between Afghanistan and Pakistan along Torkham border area which led to a four day border closure. This incident points to the underlying simmering tensions between the two states which are highly detrimental for the implementation of any security mechanism in the region. The author suggests that both Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work in collaboration to fight off the collective menace of terrorism, while at the same time should aim at improving the mutual trust and diplomatic relations. A comprehensive debate about ballistic missiles development in South Asia and the hindrances in the way of normalization of two nuclear power states, i.e. India and Pakistan can also be found in this issue.

Concurrently, Pakistan-US relations at this point in time do not seem anywhere close to ideal or even normal. The pressure on Pakistan to roll back its nuclear program, a constant nudge to “do more”, demand for handing over of Dr. Shakeel Afridi and an overt dissatisfaction about Pakistan’s alleged association with and support for Haqqani group, are all being repeatedly highlighted by the US policy makers. The distrust towards Pakistan and preferential treatment meted out to India by the US is a clear indication of the downward spiral that the Pak-US relations have fallen into. An exclusive article looks at all these factors in Pak-US relations and suggests useful recommendations for Pakistan to deal with this situation while keeping the national interest in sight.

Some other important areas covered in this issue deal with Youm-e-Takbeer that commemorates the 18th anniversary of nuclear detonation by Pakistan. The journal also reflects upon CASA-1000, recently launched in the month of May. CPEC and the expected challenges in its implementation, the disaster of Chernobyl and possible lessons for Pakistan also make part of this issue.

It is hoped that the issue will help readers in staying updated with the current political environment and 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 improvement 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](#).

Syedah Sadia Kazmi
Senior Research Associate

Chernobyl: An Unlearned Lesson

Saima Ali

As the clock turned 1:23 am on April 26, 1986, the plant's reactor number four exploded and changed the fate of a generation living across the former Soviet Union. Church bells rang and mourners laid flowers with tears, anger and screams at Chernobyl's memorial square. The Chernobyl tragedy once again fanned an everlasting pain for those lost their lives to fight nuclear death. Survivors said the chaos of that time is etched in their minds forever.

Ukrainians held candlelit vigils last Tuesday to mark 30 years since the world's worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl spewed radiation across Europe and left several thousand people dead or dying. Thirty years later, the effects of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in Ukraine are still being felt. A 30-kilometre zone surrounding the nuclear reactor is still uninhabitable, with only radioactive animals wandering the wasteland. The radioactivity in the air is estimated to be 10-100 times greater than the amount that is considered safe. The 100,000-plus people who lived in the area were only evacuated more than 10 days after the nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl on April 26, 1986. This unlawful delay is believed to have caused at least 4,000 deaths in the last three decades and untold tens of thousands will die early deaths because of the radioactivity.

The terror struck locals as they watched poisonous clouds of radiation waft in from Chernobyl. The exact number of dead remains a subject of intense debate because the Soviet authorities kept most of the information about the disaster under wraps. More than 200 tonnes of uranium remain inside the crippled reactor that spattered radiation across three quarters of Europe. The plant's reactor exploded on April 26 and burned for 10 days in a disaster that horrified the world but which locals only heard about through rumors and tidbits from jammed Western radio broadcasts. The Communist Party kept to its steadfast tradition of saying nothing or even lying in order to keep the public from learning of a tragedy that could stain the image of the Cold War-era superpower. And it took them a day-and-a-half to vacate the 48,000 inhabitants from the nearby town of Pripjat.

It is undoubtedly true that the Soviets deserve a lot of blame for their culture of secrecy, which contributed to the scale of the tragedy. The Soviet Union did not have any safety plans in place, was slow to acknowledge the disaster and woeful in clean-up efforts. International suspicions were only raised on April 28 after Sweden detected an unexplained rise in its own radiation levels. Communist Party Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev – winner of the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for championing democratic and economic reforms – did not publicly admit the disaster until May 14. "Nobody told us anything. There was only silence," local resident Yevgeny Markevich recalled in an interview. But the authorities did relocate 116,000 people that year from the 30-kilometre (19-mile) exclusion zone that still surrounds the now-dormant plant. Some 600,000 people who became known as "liquidators" – mostly emergency workers and state employees – were dispatched with little or no protective gear to help put out the toxic flames and clean up surrounding lands.

The incidence of babies being born with deformities is much higher in Ukraine than the rest of the world as are cases of rare forms of cancer. Subsequent investigations have shown that a combination of design deficiencies and operator errors caused the disaster. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called the disaster his country's greatest challenge since the Nazi occupation in the 1940s and what he referred to as world's largest "man-made catastrophe"

The 1979 Three Mile Island incident in the US state of Pennsylvania and Chernobyl's explosion prompted a strong shift in public opinion against nuclear power. But even after Chernobyl, the 2011 nuclear plant meltdown in Japan after an earthquake should have given the world pause. . We must have learned a valuable lesson from this horrible accident. The Great powers should realize that the temporary strategic advantages gained by possessing nuclear weapons will quickly be countered as opponents develop nuclear weapons of their own. All that is left then is a very strong likelihood of mishaps like the one at Chernobyl destroying towns, cities and countries. The lesson we should have learned from the disaster is that nuclear power is inherently risky. Predictably, there will be an accident and, given that the effects of radioactivity last generations, this is a risk not worth taking.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/03/chernobyl-unlearned-lesson/>

The Message of Missiles: Debate on Ballistic Missiles Development in South Asia

Sidra Khan

The definitional aspect of minimum credible deterrence has evolved since 1998 when South Asia was “nucleated”. Governments of both Pakistan and India assured to have minimum credible deterrence, but as time passes the stress on minimum can be seen vanishing and today, India and Pakistan are trying to pursue relation with each other on credible deterrence policy. After passing of seventeen years, today many powerful institutions and constitutes form an important part of both India and Pakistan’s formal structure. Today, both South Asian states have highly advanced nuclear weapon delivery mechanism and with that, the competition between both states cannot be seen as slackening.

Although, competition among superpowers can be highly dangerous but the nuclear rivalry presiding in Subcontinent can be turned into a far worse situation. The reason for such worse relations is not only lacking professionalism towards the people who are at the helm of affairs in subcontinent rather it is due to the non existing relationship among the two heavily armed nuclear neighbors. Another variable, which struck a hard blow for both nations, is the rhetoric of hardliners that disrupt the normalization of relations and reduce instances for any comprehensive or composite dialogue to happen.

Currently, Pakistan is improving the deployment and the development of short range missiles having war heads with low nuclear yield. For Pakistan it is one way to deter any conventional attack from Indian side and as this could also reduce security dilemma for within the region. Similarly, Pakistan is also pursuing its efforts in the field of longer range of ballistic missiles and also their deployment. Pakistan’s Shaheen III missile whose range is 2,759 km is to date the longest ballistic range missile and was first test in the year 2015. Attributes attached to Shaheen III is that its reach is till bay of Bengal which are the Indian control islands and also the mainland of Indian Territory. On the other hand, Pakistan is also testing many other missiles in Shaheen series.

It’s a fact that there exists no match between India and Pakistan’s conventional and nuclear capability, the growing asymmetry in nuclear terms is always been distressed especially by the recent launch of Indian ballistic missile. Fired from a mobile launcher, the Prithvi-II has again put subcontinent in a tense environment and a wave of conflict has again surged all over subcontinent. India is actively pursuing its aggressive policy of pre-emption against Pakistan indirectly. Although, the tests conducted were a failed one but it did added quite a threatening effect irrespective of the fact that it was just to add another modification. Assertively, Indians choose this missile randomly from their production stockpile.

Notwithstanding these aspects, the rigorous development and modernization of Indians military is significantly disturbing balance of power within the region of South Asia. India’s quest which is aimed

at gaining the BMD has significantly undermined the already existing paradigm of strategic equilibrium, as the BMD shield system to great lengths help India and make them believe that it can successfully carry out a nuclear strike against Pakistan while defending itself against any possible out course. With these facts it quite evident for Pakistan now to seek vital strategic partners who in turn could help Pakistan reduce such asymmetry and also provide Pakistan with a balanced counter move. This indeed has also put Pakistan in great pressure as to develop such missiles along with their delivery systems which can counter the harsh realities of India's BMD. India now having the shield system of BMD can now initiate a conventional military attack on Pakistan through the cold start doctrine.

With all these developments and advancements in subcontinent, it is quite surprisingly to see that Pakistan is leading the nuclear arms race against India by the ratio of 10 nuclear weapons, shown by an info-graphic at Bulletin of atomic scientists. Although Pakistan had, quite a time initiated steps and dialogue with India to reduce the nuclear arms race in South Asia, but India has always rejected such proposals and leaned towards creating more instability in the region. Pakistan in total possesses, around 120 atomic weapons leaving India with only 110.

Further adding the complexity, Indians leaders irrespective of which party they belong to, do not want to improve relations with the neighbors especially Pakistan. Even if Pakistan tries to take coordinated actions to improve these relations they are snubbed neither by the democratic leaders of India or by non-state entities prevailing within Indian governmental structure. Pakistani leader are accused of not moving beyond the issue of Kashmir with their talks with India which for Pakistan is the core demand and solving Kashmir issue will naturally move the mutual relations of India and Pakistan forward.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/11/message-missiles-debate-ballistic-missiles-development-south-asia/>

Nuclearization of Indian Ocean and Implications for South Asian Region

Maimuna Ashraf

The academic world is lately buzzing with the critiques on naval projection of Indian Ocean and sea-based nuclear deterrence in Indo Pacific Asia since the Indian officials proclaimed to formally commission its nuclear powered submarine – INS Arihant – into operational service after finishing the weapons trials and deep sea diving drills. This addition implies two evident and instant implications; first, it is likely to provide India a seaborne nuclear deterrent, notwithstanding the certain attributes of Arihant that is believed to limit its operational role and the skepticism about success rate of missiles tested from this submarine. Second, it will elevate India's rivalry with China and Pakistan into the maritime domain. Consequently, oceans now have more significant role in strategy than before.

The security challenges in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) had magnified in wake of economic trade, energy security and rising rivalry between India and China. In the words of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, “whoever attains maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean would be a prominent player on the international scene. Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominated Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty-first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters.” The region has thus become the hub of power competition between the key regional powers. China meets its growing energy needs by importing majority of the oil through Indian Ocean, whereas India with its hegemonic ambitions in the region wants to keep its traditional influence in the ocean while US already has naval presence in the region. However, the strategic shift did not remain confined to economic worth or conventional military influence and the powerful nuclear weapons turned out to be the most recent substantial aspect in this strategic contest. Thus, in the current milieu, four nuclear states are having strategic interests in the region and the water body of Indo-Pacific Asia has become the theatre of trilateral regional quest for influence between US-China, India-China and now India-Pakistan. The bilateral rivalries in this trilateral is making the existing environment in the region far from stable. The India-US nuclear deal and growing strategic partnership is largely viewed an alliance to counter China and Pakistan. Conversely, India is skeptical about the Chinese claim that ‘string of pearls’ aims to provide alternative sea trade routes and suspect it an effort to militarize or probably nuclearize the region. The launch of India's INS Arihant would not be worrisome for China even if it indicates New Delhi aspiration to nuclearize its Navy because China already has advanced nuclear capabilities but it disturbs the deterrence equation in South Asia. The landscape of South Asian region is already unstable with India-Pakistan nuclear rivalry. The conventional asymmetry between both states has made Pakistan to restrict its doctrine for full-spectrum deterrence and after launch of Indian nuclear powered submarine this rivalry has entered in the Indian Ocean.

Here arise the questions that why a state would go for sea-based capabilities when its land based missiles are able to cover its adversary? To understand this phenomenon that why states adopt a certain portfolio of nuclear weapons one must comprehend the policymakers' decisions about the nuclear force structures. For instance, a state can acquire certain capabilities by possessing an individual nuclear platform because nuclear platforms vary in terms of range, destructive power, vulnerability to attack, effectiveness against different kinds of enemy forces, and other important attributes. Hence the acquisition of a particular nuclear platform is inadequate. In order to achieve the best state goals and assured deterrence, nuclear optimists believe that states must consider diversifying weapons and totality of nuclear capabilities by creating a portfolio of platforms.

According to nuclear scholars "diversification is advantageous for defensive reasons. Lacking experience with nuclear conflict, nations cannot know which weapons will prove most effective or most vulnerable on the battlefield. Emphasizing a particular nuclear platform increases the risk that nuclear forces will become vulnerable to enemy counterforce targeting or other measures or even to unforeseen or accidental logistical or maintenance problems. This is one of the fundamental justifications for the nuclear triad." Furthermore, it is said by Former Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Reed, "Its diversity poses an insoluble targeting problem to any aggressor. Any attack that might seriously cripple one leg of the Triad constitutes a clear and unambiguous warning to the other two. There is no known way to attack all three simultaneously".

Another question that often surfaces against Pakistan is that if Indian nuclear submarine are aimed to deter China the why Islamabad would enter into a maritime nuclear race with New Delhi? The answer is in understanding that this sea-based nuclear deterrence transpired from the fright of being destroyed by a state possessing superior capabilities. Just like India is compelled to respond Chinese sea based nuclear developments so is Pakistan in case with India. Many analysts believe that a diversified nuclear force structure, covering each leg of nuclear triad, assure the credible second strike capability and mutual fears of destruction. Thus reduces the vulnerability of nuclear attack and help stabilize a nuclear relationship.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid optimistic rationale about sea based deterrence, it is valid assertion that nuclear rivalry into the maritime can create greater instability. Many analysts are skeptical about the notion that sea-based nuclear arsenals can act as stabilizer in the region. In the next few years most of the sea-based nuclear weapons in the region, primarily India and China, may move from design and testing phase to active deployment. Nevertheless, the stability or instability of Indian Ocean will not be determined by weapons only rather it would largely depend on the bilateral relations, regional tensions and development of other sophisticated capabilities that primarily include anti-submarine warfare (ASW), in which the US might again assist India. Such sea-based nuclear cooperation between two states will fuel Pakistan's naval nuclear ambitions and Pakistan may look to neutralize developments with India by deploying submarine launched variant of cruise missile on conventional submarine. Resultantly, the ambiguous combination of conventional and nuclear capabilities at sea would be an additional challenge.

Among many other prevailing challenges, the South Asian regional security has newly been challenged by the recent secret test of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) K-4. The test boosted Indian deterrence capability but disturbed strategic balance in the already murky regional landscape by creating security dilemma for Pakistan. Pragmatically, Pakistan and India should abide by the agreement on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests which was reached between the two states in 2005, but recently violated by carrying out covert K4 test. Such infringement and negligence can fraught many regional security risks including nuclear accident and miscalculation. Ideally, the security of Indian Ocean should be matter of concern for states sharing economic and strategic interests in the region. While states in Indo Pacific Region are developing their nuclear submarine programs, vital matters regarding command and control, future posture and pre-notification of missiles tests should be addressed to avoid mistrust, miscommunication and misconception.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/11/message-missiles-debate-ballistic-missiles-development-south-asia/>

CASA 1000: An Energetic Challenge

Shahzadi Tooba

The Central Asia-South Asia (CASA)-1000 project has been launched by the leaders of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan on May 12, marking an important milestone for the integration of the two regions. The 1,200km, 1,300MW electricity link called CASA-1000 is set to connect the four countries by 2018. It aims to provide surplus electricity from Central Asia to the two countries in the southern part of the continent, alleviating their energy crisis. Tajikistan is expected to supply more than 75 per cent of the electricity envisaged by the project, while neighboring Kyrgyzstan will supply the remainder. Afghanistan will be receiving 300MW of electricity and Pakistan the remaining 1,000MW.

The CASA-1000 represents landmark cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also holds the promise to establish and develop inter regional linkages between Central and South Asia. The project devised on the similar lines as the North American grid spanning over 340,000km and European power system traversing a territory of 230,000km, though ambitious but seems achievable. A high level inter-governmental committee has already been established to evolve the modalities for its implementation, resolve technical issues and devise rules and regulations. Hydroelectricity can play an important complementary role, in particular for Pakistan, due to the substantive price differential between cheap hydroelectricity in Central Asia and expensive petroleum-based power generation in Pakistan.

Despite the pivotal role played by gas and challenges faced by hydropower, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could serve as an additional source of seasonal peak-load supplies of hydroelectricity to Pakistan.

Tajikistan alone could produce 527 billion KWh per year of electricity from its natural hydropower potential, which is still significantly underutilized. It is expected that Tajikistan's hydroelectricity production will only reach 26.4 billion KWh in 2015. Even this "modest" output will allow Dushanbe to export up to 5 billion KWh per year by 2015. Tajikistan, as a major hydroelectricity actor, should become one of the key electricity providers for CASA 1000. Hydropower supplies from Central Asia can only play a supplementary role when compared to natural gas supplies from Turkmenistan. The amount of energy which can be supplied via CASA 1000 is much less significant than gas delivered via TAPI. Furthermore, it is too early to say how much progress Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will make with the development of their hydropower potential.

Kyrgyzstan has the third largest hydropower potential (142 billion KWh) of the former Soviet republics after Russia and Tajikistan. Hydropower largely dominates the electricity mix in this country and provides numerous opportunities for export. Electricity exports are expected to rise from 1.47 billion KWh in 2010 to 6.9 billion KWh in 2020, and some of the electricity surplus can be shipped via CASA 1000 to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thanks to its developed nuclear and hydropower sectors,

Kazakhstan produces electricity at \$8 to \$15 per MWh. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where electricity is predominately produced via hydropower, the cost of electricity production varies from \$10/\$15 to \$40 per MWh, with the lower range reflecting the cost of hydropower and the higher range the cost of coal-fired thermal electricity.

In Pakistan, the cost of electricity production ranges respectively from \$25 to \$350 per MWh and \$65 to \$150 per MWh. The lower range reflects the production costs of hydropower and the higher range the cost of electricity produced from oil and diesel. Since electricity generation based on oil and diesel Central Asian electricity sold to Islamabad at a significant discount, as compared to the electricity produced by oil-fired power plants, would allow Pakistan to gain access to considerably cheaper electricity. These considerations underline the relevance for the CASA 1000 project, particularly for Pakistan. Electricity flows through CASA 1000 from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan will also reduce the demand for new power stations in Pakistan. The country can save on construction costs. In addition, if Islamabad can increase its gas imports, it will have more leverage in price negotiations with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan for electricity supplies generated by hydropower. Turkmen gas used in Pakistan's power sector would bring electricity prices down, thus forcing Central Asia hydropower producers to keep their electricity export prices relatively low.

Security challenges, however, remain the biggest challenge. According to an editorial published in Express Tribune, Afghanistan and Pakistan have serious problems to solve at the Torkham border crossing between the two countries remaining shut for three successive days, indicating the poor state of bilateral relations. Trade issues have remained hostage to the thorny bilateral relationship with accusations flying from both sides. Pakistan and Afghanistan need to focus on the greater good if CASA-1000 is to be successful. But when security challenges trump whatever good there is to be had, this seems like a difficult task. The World Bank has already admitted that security remains the biggest challenge to this project. Troublemakers will look for every opportunity to create hurdles for the project's implementation. Both countries need to overcome this highly troublesome aspect through mutual cooperation and bridge the trust deficit that exists. Perhaps, if all parties realize that a peaceful, prosperous future for the region lies in greater inter-dependence, they might start working for each other's mutual benefit. As of now, the precarious security situation in Afghanistan and its far-reaching impact on the region remain the biggest hurdle in the way of CASA-1000's successful completion.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/22/casa-1000-energetic-challenge/>

F-16 Imbroglia: Analyzing Pakistan's Situation, Responses and Recommendations

S Sadia Kazmi

The whole F-16 fiasco has started to look more like a case of “can’t swallow it and can’t spit it out”, for Pakistan. Amidst the US’ dwindling position on the agreement, and the Congress’ reluctance with regards to utilising Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to offer subsidiary on the sale of eight Lockheed Martin F-16 jets, and the pre-conditions being attached to provision of subsidiary, the negotiations are still underway to find a way out which could be acceptable to both sides and more importantly to the US Congress and India. However there are mixed hopes about the outcome of these negotiations.

While the US Congress expresses reservations about Pakistan not being fully committed to the cause of fighting terrorism and has time and again being asked Pakistan to “do more”, the Indian factor and strong lobbying it has done cannot be ruled out. India has actively been voicing its fears and concerns in case the F-16 jets are given to Pakistan, alleging that there are more chances of Pakistan using them against India than fighting terrorism or terrorist elements. Interestingly enough these concerns were there in October last year as well when the deal was agreed upon but the decision to move ahead with the deal was taken nonetheless. It is only recently that the US has almost rolled back on its offer. Short of saying a clear no, the US has actually said no by asking Pakistan to pay in full i.e. \$700 million if it wants to procure the jets.

It is somewhat disappointing to see a supposedly responsible state like the US withdrawing from its commitment but at the same time one can recall that it is nothing new. In the retrospective it looks more like the echoes from the past where the 1985 Pressler amendment by the US, authorized the banning of most of the military and economic aid to Pakistan, albeit more discreetly and without sanctions this time. Back then the purpose was to put a halt on the nuclear program, which, this time again is one of the many reasons why the US Congress is opposing the F-16 deal. Delaying the delivery of jets, Congress voicing dissatisfaction over Pakistan’s efforts to fight terrorism, assumptions about F-16 to be used against India, are all being fabricated to tighten the noose around Pakistan. This time the campaign is part of putting pressure on Pakistan for handing over of Dr. Shakeel Afridi, and to make Pakistan roll back its nuclear program, while the concerns about Haqqani network and Pakistan’s alleged association and support to it remains a constant suspicion for the US.

Looking at the past few months, one can see that Pak-US relations do not look very hopeful. The US seems to be toiling with the idea of “can’t live with it and can’t live without it”, while deciding on Pakistan’s relevance for its strategic interests in the region. The sentiments have been reciprocatively shared and expressed by both the Pakistani and American side. Mr. Sartaj Aziz stated that the bilateral relationship is not very ideal for a few months now. He even stated that Pakistan will explore alternative

options if the US doesn't fulfil its commitment. Similarly the US Congress is demanding that the F-16s should be put on hold until Pakistan an "uncertain ally" becomes a "trusted ally".

Lesson here for Pakistan, which is not even new, is to hone on its diplomatic skills. The languid diplomacy from Pakistani side creates an ideal space for the counter forces and renders even the most justified and significant causes to be seen as trivial. In addition to this, an effective diplomacy is the only way to improve Pak-US relations and to make US realize that the regional security situation cannot be pivoted around the interests of just one state i.e. India, if the US is truly sincere about having peace in the South Asia region. This message is to be firmly conveyed along with another important note to the US lawmakers sitting in the Congress that if they wish to see Pakistan "doing more" against terrorism, they should facilitate and support the process and provide for the tools and instrument by which it could be made possible instead of blocking it. This includes the provision of the promised F-16 on the agreed upon price and subsidiary. It is rather ironic that while the US senate and the recently visiting US representative to Pakistan Mr. Richard Olson are all hailing Pakistan's commitment and efforts against terrorism, the US Congress is harping on a completely different tune that is totally based on "assumptions". While Mr. Olson once again reiterated and appreciated Pakistan's role in the war against terrorism, the message coming from US congress makes it confusing. The inability to reach a unanimous and prompt verdict on the F-16 is not just nerve wrecking for Pakistan but also reflects poorly on the US non-seriousness about the issue and intentional indecisiveness.

Pakistan has also to keep in mind the strong Indian centric tilt that the US is efficiently exhibiting for some time now. Indian lobby has always been active in delaying the process of deliveries citing a direct threat to India's security. Also because India is central to US' pivot to Asia policy, any concerns from the Indian side, ultimately do hold importance for the US.

Pakistan needs to realise that the Pak-US relations have unfortunately never been built on the basis of equality. Over the last few months the not so ideal relationship between US and Pakistan coupled with the US' tighter embrace of India, is creating more difficulties for Pakistan. The US will not allow for any uncalled for rifts in its "meaningful" relations with India that aims at making India the regional power to essentially counterbalance China. On the other hand Pakistan has always been approached by the US in exchange of some services and favors only. Afghanistan war is the relevant example, where Pakistan is essentially fighting a war which is not even its own, even then its gets the blame of not doing enough. At the same time, the sacrifice of our soldiers on Pak-Afghan border has not been appreciated by the US congress. This purely transactional relationship is further fraying as the relevance of Pakistan for the US is apparently diminishing and as Pakistan is failing at convincing the US to keep an equal handed approach towards both India and Pakistan. Objectively speaking, Pakistan doesn't have any political influence nor does it have any diplomatic leverage which it could use at this time to win the deal back in its favour. This is a severely neglected area where Pakistan's diplomatic machinery seriously needs to work on.

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/05/23/comment/the-f-16-imbroglio/>

Pakistan's Gwadar Port: An Influence Multiplier Option for China

Nasurullah Brohi

The Gwadar Port project has an exceptionally important function, not only for Pakistan, but also for the rest of the region. Notably, the Chinese government has paid the bulk of the funds for the project execution. The state-owned Frontier Works Organization (FWO) of Pakistan got financial support of \$360 million from China for the expansion and the up grading of the Karakoram Highway to smooth and speed transportation of the imported and exported goods through the Gwadar Port.

In the long-run, the Gwadar Port will serve China's interests in the region. To meet the energy needs essentially required for the functioning of industries, China's oil and energy supplies travel from the gulf region through a long route across the Strait of Malacca near the areas falling under the US influence. The current route of Chinese goods transportation takes more than 45 days to reach destined markets of Europe via the Middle East. Oil supplies reaching Chinese Eastern parts coast high require additional time to transport supplies to other Western parts of China. The oil supplies from Gulf countries would be transported through Gwadar and the Karakoram Highway with highly cheaper cost, safe transportation and in a very short time to the western parts of China. Likewise, the Chinese trade will also find an easier, shorter and secure route to Middle East bringing a profitability greater than ever before. Once the project is functional, China will make huge revenues because with the completion of CPEC, the Chinese shipments will be able to reach the same destination just within 10 days. The Gwadar Port will eventually create a nexus between China, Pakistan and the Central Asian countries with prospective revenues more than billions of dollars every year for all the countries.

The changing landscape of the region is prospectively abundant by putting the finances of various mega multinational companies such as Shell is working for setting up mega oil refinery. Moreover, the Arab Countries, stuffed with high revenues from the oil resources are also rendering their plans for the port city. The business groups from the Gulf countries particularly the business enterprises from the UAE are particularly interested in investing \$90 billion for constructing high standard recreational hotels and industrial units.

The real-time efforts by the China and Pakistan collaborating for the actual usefulness of the Port are mainly due to the duty free trade and the development of the Gwadar as a Free Trade Zone. These policies appeal to investors around the globe, particularly the neighboring Gulf countries, which moreover, also encourages the confidence of many multinational companies with their immense financial strength in this port that is already the focus of the whole world. The greater economic opportunities are particularly related with the factors that most of the Central Asian states such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan along with Afghanistan all are landlocked countries and they all will depend mainly on the Gwadar Port for their trade and exports.

The Gwadar Port has capability to handle ships of 50,000-deadweight tonnage (DWT) which enables the importers to ship maximum cargo on a single ship. The liquid bulk and the containers as the main contributors for the Gwadar Port that prospectively throughput 321 to 345 million tons. The flow of financial resources mainly contributing to the Chinese economy through the fully functional Gwadar and the CPEC estimated at \$40 billion per annum by the year 2020, however, this in turn would also add a total of \$8 billion revenue per annum in Pakistan's economic resources.

In addition, the narrow estimates of revenues through the exports from Gwadar Industrial Park would reach at \$1.5 billion per annum. Given the need of high interface of Chinese and Pakistani business and investment, collaboration will immensely spur the economic activity by generating around 2 million additional employment opportunities for the people of both countries. The recent MoU signed between North South Transport Network (NSTN) Private Limited Pakistan and Gwadar International Terminal Limited (GITL) intends to setup three warehouses and storage of goods and containers with an initial level anticipation of each monthly volume capacity of 200-250 containers or 5,000-6,000 tons of cargo-total of 5% of China's international cargo volume. The three transport and logistics subsectors could earn up to \$6 billion per annum and attract creating 9,000 new enterprises and 400,000 additional jobs in the Port city.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/23052016-pakistans-gwadar-port-an-influence-multiplier-option-for-china-oped/>

Institutional Framework of NSG: A Critical Review

Beenish Altaf

Pakistan has applied for the NSG membership. A few days back it was announced by the foreign office that Pakistan's Ambassador in Vienna has written to the chairman of the NSG and, "seeking participation in the export control strong support for international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery." Especially, this move of Pakistan comes at a time when there is confusion whether non-NPT states like Pakistan and India are qualified to join this prestigious club.

On the dilemma of Pakistan's induction in the NSG club, Pakistan need not to fear much, after the latest pledge from its ever green friend China. Previously during the visit of a high-level delegation to Beijing headed by President Mamnoon Hussain, China assured that if India is allowed to get the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) it will go all out to ensure that Pakistan also joins the group. 'The issue was discussed at length and Pakistan highlighted its point of view saying that it has equal right to join the group for fulfilling its requirement for peaceful use of nuclear technology. Islamabad took the plea that if it is deprived of the NSG membership and New Delhi is allowed to join it then it will be discrimination and lead to creating an imbalance in the region. China, being member of the group and holding the veto power, assured Pakistan that it will take all measures so that it also becomes the member of the NSG, and that if India is allowed to join NSG and Pakistan is deprived of the membership of the group, Beijing will veto the move to block Indian entry.'

There is an India specific approach in this regard as in July 18, 2005, according to Indo-US Joint Statement, an exception was made for India as US President Bush declared it as a "responsible state with advanced nuclear technology," that "should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states." NSG was in fact, a body set-up specifically to restrict the diversion of nuclear material from civilian trade to military purposes. The clandestine diversion of nuclear material and equipment for the so-called Indian Peaceful Explosion of 1974 was the prime reason behind the creation of NSG, since 40 years. It is an open secret that the illicit act of breach its international agreements with Canada, i.e., diverted plutonium from the Candian-Indian Reactor, US (CIRUS) reactor provided solely for peaceful purpose, instigated South Asia region for another regional nuclear arms race.

He further assured a complete U.S. commitment to "seek an agreement from the Congress to adjust US laws and policies, and that the United States will work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India."

Although, the group is not a formal organization and its guidelines are not bindings, but still, its members are expected to incorporate the guidelines into their national export control laws. Ironically, it does not mean that any country specific diversion or waiver would become legal under the guidelines of NSG.

Indubitably, in order to step forward and improve the global non-proliferation goals, putting in new members in NSG would be an encouraging and constructive option. Along with, it would be equally vital to uphold the efficacy and effectiveness of NSG. Therefore, the expansion should be carried out on non-discriminatory bases — by taking-on the Criteria Based Approach. The meeting of June 26-27 in Buenos Aires called for discussion on the NSG's relationship with India. In this regard, on June 22, 2014 in Argentina, India has ratified its Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to expand oversight over its civilian nuclear program. This protocol was approved back in 2009 that paved the way for NSG to grant India-specific waiver for it to have commercial relations with other countries in the civilian atomic field. In effect, the waiver was necessary as India, despite being a nuclear-armed state, is not a signatory to the NPT thus does not qualify for nuclear trade. But even then, the US labeled this ratified protocol as another important step in bringing India into the international non-proliferation mainstream.

On the other hand, if the West merely to gain their economic benefits from the Asia's third-largest economy- India, and slots for New Delhi in the NSG club then there would be a disaster for NSG's credibility particularly given the irony of accumulating a member whose action was the very impetus for the organization's establishment.

For India, NSG membership could [may] boost its international standing as a responsible atomic power and also give it greater influence on issues related to global nuclear trade as many countries are already in line with similar kind of deals as of 2008. However, the country would be the only member of the body that has not signed up to the NPT; signaling an open discriminatory act towards Pakistan. Since, the NSG decisions as taken on consensus, firstly China has reaffirmed it not going to happen, but if it happens then India would always stand against any civil trade with Pakistan. Resultantly, would lead to regional nuclear arms race as India is and would remain out of NPT and would neither sign CTBT or FMCT, nor go for the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. It would be pertinent to say in this wake that west's recent demands to sign CTBT, FMCT; restrain from FSD etc all is a joke without asking the country who actually was the first player in this regional race.

Lastly, criteria based approach can really help NSG to universalize the regime application. Nevertheless, NSG would only stay behind as an 'illegitimate cartel of industrialized countries' if it still opt for country based approach instead of a adopting a non-biased criteria based approach for its expansion of member states.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/27/institutional-framework-nsg-critical-review/>

CPEC: A Challenging Project

Saima Ali

The strategic game changer project “China Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC) is biggest ever investment for both China and Pakistan. It aims to connect Gwadar port in south western Pakistan to China’s northwestern autonomous region of Xinjiang, via a network of highways, railways and pipeline to transport oil and gas. By and large construction costs are estimated at \$46 billion which is roughly 20% of Pakistan annual GDP. Beside transport the corridor will provide Pakistan with telecommunications and energy infrastructure as well. The corridor will go a long way in making Pakistan a better-off and powerful entity than ever before.

Both countries hope that this project will transform Pakistan into regional and economic hub as well as further boost to the growing ties between Pakistan and china. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, an economic initiative to connect the two countries through a web of railways, roads, pipelines, and other development projects. Once built, the nearly 2,000-mile-long corridor will shorten China’s route to the Middle East by about 7,500 miles. After its completion, the CPEC would be of enormous strategic and economic significance to China, Pakistan and other regional countries. For China the CPEC would reduce the traveling distance, for its huge volumes of trade with the Gulf countries, from existing 13000 kilometres to mere 2500 kilometres. While it will cut down the traveling time from the existing 45 days to only 10 days, it will also reduce the cost of freight by one third. Through CPEC China will be able to trade with South Asia, West Asia, the Middle East and North Africa through a much shorter route.

No wonder China is now a major investor in foreign markets. China has become the leading country in terms of foreign direct investment in Pakistan during the last decade. Chinese national economy today is the strongest in the world with its highest foreign exchange reserves. China will make huge revenues because with the completion of CPEC, the Chinese shipments will become able to reach the same destination just within 10 days period. . The project has also elevated Islamabad’s strategic partnership with the regional superpower. CPEC is viewed as an economic lifeline for Pakistan. The government in Islamabad recognizes the CPEC as the only opportunity left for Pakistan to develop itself economically and, importantly, bring stability and progress in the country.

Another vital aspect is that Gwadar Port will eventually create a nexus between China, Pakistan and the Central Asian countries with prospective revenues more than billions of dollars every year for all the countries. Pakistan’s trade with Central Asian Republics would also increase using CPEC since the CARs will be connected with CPEC based on the Quadrilateral Agreement for Traffic in Transit, which has already been signed by Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. After completion of CPEC, Pakistan’s national income will also increase since it will get royalties or transit fee on huge volumes of Chinese and CARs exports and imports to and from West Asia, South Asia, Middle East and North Africa through CPEC being the shortest route. Hence the importance of CPEC is such that it is being hailed as a “fate changer” by the Pakistan. With Chinese investment pouring in, Pakistan is desperately looking to guarantee

stability and safety to ensure the timely completion of the project. But it is important to keep in mind that challenges confronted by CPEC are still unsettled. It is facing both internal and external obstructions which could derail this multifaceted project.

A lack of domestic consensus can hinder development in any part of the world, and CPEC is no exception. When CPEC was initially introduced, every mainstream political party supported it, including the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN-N). However, the enthusiasm turned to deep concern when political parties from economically weak provinces (KPK and Baluchistan) felt that their province's reservations about CPEC were not being addressed. The debate between political parties became so intense that China has felt it necessary to put out a statement urging parties to overcome their differences. A spokesman from the Chinese embassy in Islamabad said: "Relevant parties should strengthen their communication and coordination on the matter." So it is very essential that the plan ought to be kept above politics.

The security atmosphere inside Pakistan especially Baluchistan poses numerous difficulties for CPEC. Starting from Kashgar, the project will pass through Gilgit-Baltistan and KPK, followed by Baluchistan. For that matter government has decided to install 10,000 army personnel under the command of a major-general, whose primary objective will be to safeguard Chinese engineers and guard the entire trade route. The deployment of army personnel has already begun. This shows that the civilian and military leaderships – despite differences over foreign policy – are on the same page when it comes to this strategically vital project.

Another major challenge is imposed by neighboring country India. While Pakistan is developing Gwadar to become a nerve centre for regional trade along with development of necessary infrastructure under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), India has openly stated on more than one occasion that it would go to any length to sabotage CPEC project. According to an editorial published in Pakistan observer, Apart from setting up a special cell of RAW to plan and execute anti-CPEC activities, India is luring regional and world powers to join hands to develop Chahbahar as a counter-weight to Gwadar besides construction of rail and road links through Iran to link India with Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.

Another obstacle that needs to be given close consideration is the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. It will pass through disputed region. Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway to Pakistan from China, but China cannot afford to invest billions of dollars on a road that passes through a disputed territory claimed both by India and Pakistan. Gilgit-Baltistan is disputed, underdeveloped, lacks legal status, and is not getting its fair share of CPEC attention, all of which could lead to numerous problems.

To ensure that Pakistan does not suffer, the government must not only develop contingency plans, it must also be more transparent about the deal itself. Questions have already been raised about the proposed CPEC routes. Both Balochistan's and KP's political leadership have concerns about the proposed routes and their impact on their local economies. To guarantee CPEC translucent macroeconomic stability, economic policymakers, both at the State Bank and outside, should be provided details about the expected inflows and outflows of foreign currency, and the debt and equity components of the deal. For the reasons of security and the timely completion of the CPEC project additionally with the successful functioning of the Gwadar Free Trade Zone, Pakistan has allocated a special security division of over 8, 000 military personnel.

In the words of the Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal who is managing the CPEC project: “If Pakistan does not provide stability for CPEC, Chinese will not hesitate it to find another route, practically leaving Pakistan out of this mega economic and trade route.” All in all, CPEC will face many hurdles, both domestically and from regional powers that may see it as a threat. However, with a multi-billion dollar Chinese stake in the project, and Pakistan looking at it as a lifeline for survival, optimism remains high in both countries.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/27/cpec-challenging-project/>

Risky Adventures Nuclearizing Indian Ocean

Nasir Hafeez

Indian Navy has released last year its Maritime Security Strategy aimed at ensuring secure seas. This policy has quite boldly demanded Indian sea based leg of the nuclear triad as essential to maintain nuclear deterrence. The case has been built by connecting the credibility of nuclear deterrence with the survivability of nuclear forces highlighting that the sea-based segment of the nuclear triad, due to its stealth characteristics is highly survivable and can contribute to assured second strike capability.

It is interesting that in the same report, it has also been recognised that deployment of SSBN (Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (submarine)) is predicated on the maintenance of robust command and control systems. Most of the readers may not know that submarines have a very complex command and control system. The communication with the submerged submarine, when it is out on long range patrols or deployed in specially selected hideouts, is very challenging. Any transmission from the submarine, if detected, can compromise its stealth operations leading to engagement and then destruction. Highly sophisticated systems based on Very Low Frequency (VLF) or Extremely Low Frequency (ELF), employing different techniques, are used to communicate. Additionally, acoustic transmission based on loudspeakers and hydrophones may also be employed to transmit messages through sonic communication equipment connected to land by underwater communication cables laid in areas frequently travelled by these submarines. The point I want to emphasise is that employing a submarine for assured second strike is a good option but communicating with this platform is highly problematic even under normal conditions. You can well imagine what may happen under hostile conditions when the adversary may also employ electronic warfare techniques to further jam the already fragile communication.

The command and control of a nuclear submarine is even more problematic. The submarine based deterrence has to rely on pre-delegation of authority. The commander of submarine once in deployed position cannot be issued the codes necessary to arm the nuclear weapon systems through any sure means. The only best option is that these codes are kept inside the submarines, under different safeguards to ensure its authorised use. In all probabilities these safeguards will work and the nuclear weapons based on submarines are used when desired and not used when not desired, ensuring both positive and negative control simultaneously.

It is important to note that the role of political leadership in the overall nuclear decision making is highly diluted when the command is pre-delegated, which is the only option in case of deployment of SSBN. Indian political leadership, which often guards jealously its authority over military, may now be ready for this pre-delegation in the highest national security decision making. There are other risks too. In case of pre-delegation the entire burden of responsibility transfers to few men, the crew of a submarine, deep inside in the depth of an ocean, in the most uncertain and highly challenging physically

and psychologically environment. Asking them to make the critical decision of use of nuclear weapon without any reliable mode of communication is a risky affair and a very tough ordeal.

“INS ARIHANT”, India’s ambitious nuclear submarine programme under construction in Visakhapatnam, is partly based on the old Akula-class Soviet SSN design and is India’s first indigenously designed nuclear submarine. Its acoustic signature is very high which makes it relatively easy for potential adversaries to track. In such case the desired characteristics of stealth operations, being essential, may be compromised. Additionally, “INS ARIHANT has missed many deadlines for its deployment and has been found prone to accidents. Indian Navy, however, despite so many challenges is not in any mood to give up this ambitious project.

It is quite understandable that developing efficient and effective military hardware is a very tall order for a developing country like India which has a very poor record in this field. Therefore the recent developments can be appreciated at best as a technology demonstrator but will take a while to achieve its claimed capability.

While India is trying to build its naval leg of the triad, one thing is quite sure that this is a serious attempt to nuclearise Indian Ocean and a very dangerous one. Imagine an unreliable submarine with nuclear weapons onboard patrolling in Indian Ocean, which is the hub of sea based international communication and trade. This situation is highly risky not only for countries of the region but for the entire world and may have serious implications for the business activity emanating or passing through Indian Ocean. Any accident may create ugly situation that will be beyond the Indian capacity to handle. It is quite possible that Indian Navy may not even disclose such an accident and may try to cover up due to reasons of secrecy or national security. A similar situation occurred in the past, when Russian submarine, Kursk, met an accident in the Barents Sea in August 2000. Russian Navy did not disclose the accident for various reasons but later, due to enormous size of rescue work involved, were forced to do so and sought international help. Fortunately it was in a far off, less frequented area and there was no nuclear explosion. In case of India, similar reaction is expected which can be dangerous and highly serious for the maritime security of Indian Ocean.

To sum up, it is highly disturbing for Pakistan that India is developing its second strike capability which may upset the strategic stability in the region. It may dilute political control of Indian Nuclear weapons. At the same time it is highly risky and may have serious implications for maritime security of the entire Indian Ocean. While India is striving hard to tilt the power balance in its favour, Pakistan also has to do something to restore strategic balance in the overall interest of peace in the region and in the world.

<http://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2016-05-28/page-19/detail-1>

The 18th Youm-e-Takbeer

Beenish Altaf

1998 observed the overt nuclearisation of South Asia when both arch-rivals, Pakistan and India, detonated their nuclear devices. 1998 is celebrated as the advent of second nuclear age, whereas the first being the Cold War that ended in 1991. Consequently, the peril of horizontal proliferation in South Asia embodied another nuclear arms race after the end of the Cold War. Till now, both Pakistan and India have persistently developed more than the number of nuclear weapons than what they had in 1998. Analysts believe that both countries have meticulously developed enough nuclear weapons to destroy each other thrice. The number of nuclear weapons in South Asia, no matter whether it is strategic or tactical, gives birth to numerous hard questions on the deterrence equilibrium and strategic stability. For example, how much of a numerical advantage or additional nuclear weaponry does Delhi and Islamabad think they need over the other? Is Islamabad and New Delhi over-reliant on their nuclear arsenals? Critics believe that for maintaining credible minimum deterrence, the credibility of a sufficient number of nuclear weapons has more significance than a trivial nuclear superiority.

The arms race stability in South Asia benefited Pakistan to maintain its minimum, sufficient, survivable and potent nuclear weapons, whereas most of the critics believe that the pace is inexcusably fast. Nevertheless, Pakistan attributed its development of nuclear weapons to the widening conventional asymmetry with its neighbour. It is argued that conventional asymmetry is inversely proportional to lower nuclear threshold, which resulted into a terrible nuclear weapons development in South Asia. Pakistan is advocating the rising conventional disparity, putting it in a perilous road to maintain credible minimum deterrence. One critic raised questions about CMD as renunciation of nuclear war fighting.

Ironically, Pakistan is surrounded by two nuclear neighbours, and that is the basic reason that motivated Pakistan for nuclear tests, and that was the best timely decision by Pakistan. As there was need to maintain balance of power and necessary deterrence in the region keeping in mind the ever untrustworthy relations between Pakistan and India.

However, it is imperative to highlight the most concrete driving agent behind such crucial and highly-criticized decision of conducting nuclear weapons test by Pakistan. It was India that had actually started this race of acquisition of nuclear weapons in the region. It was India that actually upset the balance of power in the region. Though Pakistan was long claiming that it did possess the nuclear technology but had no intention to test the weapons, however, circumstances nudged Pakistan to test nuclear weapons for deterrence and balancing of power. No country can overlook its security concerns and issues.

Pakistan has fought multiple wars and has had many borders collision with its immediate neighbour India since its inception. Furthermore, India ironically designed its Pakistan-centric foreign

policy to prevail its supremacy in the region and also lobbied with developed nations. It is an open secret that numerous trade and military sanctions were introduced to impose on Pakistan in that decade. However, the US did impose a few on Pakistan. But the then government of Pakistan took a hard decision of not giving up to international pressure and triggered the button of nuclear weapons test to maintain sovereignty and security of Pakistan. Local and foreign observers acknowledge that without being a nuclear power, the country might have suffered a serious setback when its eastern neighbour had amassed troops on the border in a threatening posture in 2002.

History of nuclear weapons in the region can be traced back to 1974 when New Delhi showed its intent to become a nuclear power. During the same time period, it exploded an atomic device, a weapon of mass destruction and named it “Smiling Buddha” rather ironically. After that incident, the then prominent leader of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, commissioned a team of experts to begin preparations to respond on the basis of “even if the nation has to eat grass” to achieve it. Fortunately, succeeding rulers also understood the need and didn’t prove to be an obstacle in the way of achieving the target of becoming a nuclear power.

After the bold decision of conducting a nuclear weapons test, Pakistan faced isolation at international stage. The facts were not highlighted by international media, particularly in the context of ever-existing threat to Pakistan from its conventional rival India. New Delhi’s shrewd policies, particularly of acting as a hostile upper riparian and its adamant stand on Kashmir, cannot by any stretch of imagination be termed friendly.

May 28 is the day to acknowledge the efforts of many scientists for making Pakistan’s security unconquered and unchallenged. May 28, 1998 was a remarkable day not only for Pakistan but also for the whole region as the threat of unbalanced power in the region lost its existence. May Pakistan being nuclear power would be able to play its due role in maintaining peace in the world. Long Live Pakistan!

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/28-May-16/the-18th-youm-e-takbeer>

Regional Rapport

Yasir Masood

The benefits of globalisation have clearly multiplied around the world. At the same time, security threats have also mushroomed, along with the efforts of states to reap speedy economic gains. These factors are pushing regions to bank on 'collective connectivity' to achieve their common goals of economic development and security. In South Asia, Pakistan's strategic and geographical position and vitality impress proponents of regional integration, but unfortunately we are yet to solve the dominating conundrums being posed by our neighbours. Take, for instance, the case of Afghanistan. It has long been clear to policy practitioners that peace in both countries is primarily connected with Afghan stability. Unrest on both sides of the frontier has undoubtedly put both our economies in tatters, and peace remains a distant dream. A flashback to the Cold War era is sufficient to remind us that Afghanistan and Pakistan became breeding grounds for extremist ideologies and groups spawned by US policies. After the USSR's defeat, these extremists clothed their ideologies with new brands of terrorist thought, and sporadically threatened a new Pak-Afghan security, as well as that of other countries in the region. The US has been justifying its deceptive relations by insisting that Pakistan needs to wipe out both the 'good and the bad Taliban'. It is high time the Americans started acting fairly when it comes to their relations with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Otherwise, blowbacks like those experienced in the Middle East could crop up in this region as well.

The Afghans, instead of realising the benefits ensuing from peace and security, continue to blame Pakistan for all terrorist attacks within their territory. These accusations serve to conceal their own inability and lack of will to tackle their own terrorist problem. For its part, Pakistan has been badly jolted by a series of recent lethal terrorist attacks planned on Afghan soil. One recalls that President Ashraf Ghani, on his visit to Pakistan in 2014, announced that "we want to bolster security and defence ties with Pakistan including cooperation in training and border management". Nonetheless, he now wants to "isolate" Pakistan under immense domestic pressure.

Within the region, as horrific and even far-fetched as this may sound, there is always the possibility of India and Pakistan sliding into a nuclear war. This is especially possible if India continues using double standards at the international level and continues to label Pakistan a safe haven for terrorists. In reality, India itself has been spending huge sums to support extremist elements on Afghan soil that work to de-stabilise Pakistan.

As far as Pakistani security is concerned, there are two contesting schools of thought in opposition to each other. Or put differently, the realists and liberals are both striving to ensure their own power positions. As a result, the state's security is not being pursued to its logical conclusion. Like all other realists, ours too believe that the instruments of violence, defence and deterrence define the directions of state relationships. Our liberals, like others elsewhere, firmly believe in soft power tools like economic cooperation, people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange, but resolutely reject violence as an instrument in state affairs. Both schools of thought are to some extent justified, but the

nub of the problem is that the manoeuvres for power on the part of both schools on the political, foreign, domestic, diplomatic and institutional fronts, do not permit a breathing space that will allow our state to grow in the right direction. Institutional harmony can strengthen us at home, and that can pave the way for better relationships in the region.

As a leader in the region, China has been far-sighted in its foreign policy. What we need to be wary of is that the completion of the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor may become a Herculean task in view of the ongoing uncertain regional rivalries. We should seriously turn our minds towards pondering on how to improve our relations with Afghanistan. Without this, peace and economic prosperity in Pakistan will remain an elusive mirage. What we need are better relations with Afghanistan, India, Iran, Russia and the US. This will allow us to move towards achieving stability, security and a strong economy.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1112525/regional-rapport/>

17 Days v.s. 18 Years

Maimuna Ashraf

This May, the two South Asian nuclear states mark the eighteenth anniversary to the first detonation of their nuclear devices. Pakistan and India celebrates national days in commemoration of Chagai and Pokhran-II respectively that established nuclear deterrence for both states. The explosion of atomic bombs embarked 'overt' nuclearization of South Asia albeit the aspect of nuclear deterrence in the region can be traced back to the pre-nuclearization period when the debates raged with ambiguities regarding their nuclear capabilities.

The strategic stability debate in South Asia had already taken a new dimension when India conducted its so called peaceful nuclear test in 1974. After these tests Pakistan urged Western powers to establish a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, however all such efforts were opposed. In April 1998, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressed letters to world leaders, including President Clinton, drawing their attention to India's pronouncements which "connote a giant leap towards fully operationalizing Indian nuclear capability", but these requests were treated indifferently.

India announced two sets of nuclear detonations on May 11 and 13. It was a worrisome and shocking moment for the world especially for Pakistan. Notwithstanding it was the first explosion since the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature in 1996 and Indian initiative of nuclear detonation had heavily tilted balance of power towards India in South Asia accompanied with the fear to start a destabilizing arms race between the neighboring states, there was no retaliatory action by the international community against India for violating the established norm of nuclear non-proliferation.

The change in the geostrategic situation of the region, after Indian nuclear tests, was evident in the seventeen days before Pakistan decided to exercise its nuclear option. The additional army divisions were sent into Indian-held Kashmir and Pakistan had been told 'to realize the new realities on the ground' by the then Indian home minister and former BJP president, Mr. Lal Krishan. He warned Pakistan about the government's new pro-active approach to deal firmly with Pakistan in Kashmir. India's entrance in the nuclear club had been declared a decisive step by the Indian policy makers to bring a qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pak relations, particularly in finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. These seventeen days were the most critical in the history of Pakistan. After deliberating various policy options and days of excruciating, Pakistan finally decided to carry out nuclear tests on May 28 and 30 in response to Indian nuclear explosions. Finally, the agonizing clouds displaced and replaced with the mushroom-shaped smoke. Interestingly, the United Nations Security Council Resolution to condemn the nuclear detonation of two states and US sanctions were surfaced only after Pakistan conducted the nuclear tests.

After the nuclear tests by Pakistan and India, the debate on nuclear stability was divided into two groups: nuclear optimists and nuclear pessimists. The optimists maintained that the possession of nuclear weapons by both states would stabilize the region by ensuring nuclear parity and mutual fears

of catastrophic destruction. Conversely, the pessimists argued that the miscalculations, misunderstandings and various organizational problems might lead to deterrence failure. In addition they highlighted the destabilizing consequence of nuclear proliferation. Many critics believe that nuclearization had positive impact on the crisis behavior and defends the argument that post nuclearization conflicts between India and Pakistan took place as result of regional tiffs and not as an effect of nuclearization. Moreover, these conflicts did not escalate due to the deterrence effects, potential nuclear escalation and danger of nuclear war.

Recounting to the realities of South Asia, pragmatically the presence of nuclear weapons influenced the strategic decisions in post nuclearization conflicts; Kargil, Operation Prakram and Mumbai attacks. The conventional asymmetry between the two arch rivals, can persuade the conventionally strong to adopt destabilizing measures even in the nuclearized environment. The threat to be retaliated by nuclear weapons prevents the conventionally stronger opponent from using its force and thus prevents the other nuclear power, with less conventional force, from full-scale conventional conquest. Furthermore, the existence of nuclear weapons internationalizes any confrontation between the two states, thus ensures a better resolution than what could be in absence of nuclear weapons.

In recent times, the growing disparity and asymmetry in South Asia is favorable to India but challenging for Pakistan. Nonetheless, the nuclear factor balances the strategic equation in South Asian landscape. Deterrence, as precisely termed, is “the exploitation of a threat without implementing it, or exploiting the existence of weapons without activating them”. Consequently, nuclear weapons are essentially supposed to be the weapons of peace and not war. It is extensively believed that the existence of nuclear weapons restrained Pakistan and India to wage another war after 1971. However the need of time is that both states should start strategic dialogues to consider Confidence Building Measures (CBM) in order to avoid any misfortune event in future. This would be significant move in a scenario when Pakistan in response to India is building up its nuclear capabilities to ensure the credibility of its nuclear deterrence. India’s doctrinal transformation and ballistic missile defense capabilities, which are rapidly maturing, had indulged Pakistan in miniaturization of warheads. Lately, India’s evolving sea-based capabilities is coercing Pakistan to develop full spectrum credible minimum deterrence capability, by having each leg of nuclear triad, to deter all form of aggression.

After eighteen years of deterrence, 28th May reminds the “historic milestone” towards reinforcement and maintenance of Pakistan’s deterrence capability. This timely and successful response showed operational preparedness of the Strategic Forces and Pakistan’s capabilities to safeguard its security, which should not be undermined. Every year the day recalls that Pakistan’s decision to exercise the nuclear option had been taken in the interest of national self-defense, to deter aggression, whether nuclear or conventional. Thus, on 28th May Pakistan completed a landmark journey with triumph, which makes this a historical occasion for all the years to come.

<http://southasiajournal.net/17-days-vs-18-years/>

General Conference on IAEA Activities: An Overview

Shahzadi Tooba Hussain Syed

The General Conference consists of all Member States and holds regular sessions annually usually within the month of September, set by the General Conference at its previous regular annual session. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Conference guide the implementation of IAEA activities by its Member States and the Secretariat for the coming year.

The provisional agenda for all regular sessions of the General Conference draw up by the Director General in consultation with the Board of Governors and sent to all Members of the Agency and to all organizations to which notification of the session has to be sent, not later than ninety days in advance of the session. The contents of each regular session include:

- (a) All items the inclusion of which has been decided by the General Conference at a previous session;
- (b) All items proposed by the Board of Governors;
- (c) All items proposed by any Member of the Agency;
- (d) All resolutions and all agenda items which the United Nations has referred or proposed to the Agency and which the Board of Governors submits to the General Conference, in accordance with the agreement establishing the relationship between the Agency and the United Nations;
- (e) Any item proposed by a specialized agency in accordance with the agreement establishing the relationship between the Agency and that specialized agency;
- (f) Election of Members to membership of the Board of Governors;
- (g) The annual report of the Board of Governors and such other reports as the Board of Governors may submit to the General Conference;
- (h) The budget of the Agency for the ensuing financial year and all items pertaining to this budget;
- (i) A report by the Board of Governors on the audited accounts of the Agency for the preceding financial year;
- (j) Any report to be submitted to the United Nations requiring approval by the General Conference;
- (k) The opening date of the next regular session of the General Conference;
- (l) All items which the Director General, in agreement with the Board of Governors, deems necessary to put before the General Conference; and
- (m) Other items required by the Statute of the Agency.

In its 59th General Conference, last year, the IAEA General Conference adopted resolutions further strengthening the IAEA's work in the areas of nuclear science and technology, safety, security, safeguards and technical cooperation. Delegates also approved the IAEA's budget for 2016-2017.

They additionally adopted a resolution on nuclear security which, among others, calls on the IAEA to continue to implement the Nuclear Security Plan 2014-2017.

Delegates also adopted a resolution on strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications covering both power and non-power applications. Under the same umbrella, delegates adopted another resolution inviting States to make financial commitments and contributions so as to complete the Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories (ReNuAL) by 2017.

A resolution on strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of IAEA safeguards calls on all Member States to give their full and continuing support to the Agency in order to ensure that it is able to meet its safeguards responsibilities.

The General Conference approved the applications of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turkmenistan for membership in the IAEA. Membership will take effect once the appropriate legal instruments are deposited with the Agency.

For Pakistan, the most notably thing was being elected among the other new IAEA Board members on 17 September, 2015 to serve for two years. Others are: Belarus, Ghana, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Namibia, Paraguay, Philippines, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay. The Board of Governors generally meets five times per year: in March and June, twice in September (before and after the General Conference) and in December.

At its meetings, the Board examines and makes recommendations to the General Conference on the IAEA's accounts, program and budget, and considers applications for membership. It also approves safeguards agreements and the publication of the IAEA's safety standards and has the responsibility of appointing the Director General of the IAEA with the approval of the General Conference.

The 60th IAEA General Conference is due to be held from 26-30 September 2016 at the Agency's headquarters in Vienna. Let's see what it brings for Pakistan.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/05/29/general-conference-iaea-activities-overview/>

Indian Ocean Power Struggle: Pakistan Responding India

Sidra Khan

The third largest ocean in the world, the Indian Ocean, can be characterized as a gateway, linking the East with the West and different regions of the world. The rising geo-politics in the Indian Ocean can be directed as power struggle between states to increase their influence and impact in the region. The international world lately has been buzzing with assessments and critique on Indian naval projection in Indian Ocean and also the sea-based nuclear deterrence around the region of Indo-Pacific.

Since the last decade the concept of Asian Century is been extensively used and the factors like increased economies, big markets, trade routes and access to resources and energy has shaped the geo-politics of Asia. The Indian Ocean encloses these rising economies and with that have the access to the necessary choke points. As Rear Admiral Alfred Mahan said, “whoever attained the maritime supremacy in Indian Ocean will become an important actor internationally.”

Also, whoever controls the Indian Ocean will be dominating Asia. Today, Asia has the potential to be the biggest market economy and the Indian Ocean is the key to all the seven sea of the world. In the twenty first century, the future of the world will be decided depending on these seven seas. Since then, the Indian Ocean has become a centre point of power struggle among many regional players.

Pakistan is troubled and worried by the latest Indian development in Indian Ocean, especially the recent tests conducted by submarine launched, nuclear capable ballistic missile. These gestures of India in Indian Ocean, although are directed towards the Chinese modernization of their naval forces, yet they disturb the delicate balance of strategic stability in South Asia. New Delhi has also confirmed the testing of a K4 missile, also a submarine launched, having the capacity to carry the nuclear warhead up to the range of 3500 km.

The worrisome moment for Pakistan which is causing frequent frictions and has raised tensions among the international world is India did not inform Pakistan of these tests. As in 1988, both India and Pakistan have given a mutual understanding regarding prior information of each other's missiles tests. Another agreement was signed in 2005 between both states on the pre-notification on the ballistic missile test for the both states to avoid any sort of misunderstanding and direct confrontation.

The accelerated growth of India's nuclear development and the nuclearization of Indian Ocean will greatly upset the strategic balance of South Asia. The evolving nuclear dimensions in Indian Ocean is making Islamabad jump in a new competition of nuclear race with its arch rival India, hence creating an alarming situation at the international arena.

Both states today are said to be building their naval forces. So far, India been the largest importer of weapon in South Asia, has already assigned around \$16 billion for the development of its nuclear submarines and the naval warships. There are also reports that suggest India is developing around 160 navy ships, few stealth destroyers and also anti-submarines corvettes.

If Pakistani side is viewed, Islamabad has just approved a proposal to buy diesel-electric submarines. If looked, eighteen years back, Pakistan was forced to be a nuclear weapon state when India first exploded its nuclear device in May 1998. Even that moment, Pakistan waited and looked towards the international community to take action against India but in vain. Pakistan having no other option became a nuclear weapon state.

In the similar context, Pakistan today had requested United Nations not to let Indian Ocean be a nuclear zone. But Pakistan also needs to look for different avenues to neutralize the Indian developments in Indian Ocean by having a permanent solution to the existing problem, Pakistan's initiative for a submarine launched cruise missile (Hatf-7-Babur).

The explorations made by the Gulf States highlighted the worth of the Indian Ocean economically; however these explorations are also the biggest factor, which has caused such a power struggle in Indian Ocean. Today Indian Ocean has become a point of competition between China, India and Pakistan.

The bilateral disagreements between China and India and also between Pakistan and India are acting as a catalyst which is escalating the nuclear activities in the region. Although, Pakistan has considered putting up a proposal calling for making Indian Ocean a Nuclear free zone which might be difficult owing to the region's geographical importance and the ongoing power struggle.

The question which concerns many academicians and analysts is, if India's nuclear development is aimed against China then why and for what Pakistan is entering into a nuclear race with India. The answer can be easily understood by taking an example from the past, India's nuclear explosion of 1998 was directed against China's explosion as India felt vulnerable, they were compelled to make necessary steps to deter China.

India's explosion created a direct security dilemma for Pakistan whose sovereignty was put at stake. Also the fact that international community seemed to be at ease with the Indian nuclear explosion it was not a knee jerk reaction for Pakistan to take such a decision but it was compelled by the actions of India.

Today as Indians are forced to respond to the Chinese threat in sea based nuclear developments; Pakistan is also forced to respond to the threats which arise by the accelerated nuclear sea based growth of India to stabilize the unique line of deterrence, which India keeps upsetting. Pakistan's minimal deterrence strategy is what has kept a balance and reduced the possibility of a nuclear attack.

<http://www.voiceofjournalists.com/indian-ocean-power-struggle-pakistan-responding-india/>

Pak-Afghan Standoff At Torkham: Perils of Border Security

S Sadia Kazmi

The recent border situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan at Torkham border crossing quickly escalated into a crisis when reportedly both the sides brought their armored vehicles along the border against each other. The regular border traffic and movement across the Durand line, in the area of Torkham presented quite an alarming picture of Pak-Afghan relations. The border remained sealed for 4 consecutive days. Staying short of an active engagement between the two, the tense standoff was not only nerve wrecking but thought provoking as well.

First and foremost the very issue of fencing of the border that gave rise to this 4 day situation is to be taken into account. It also makes one raise a very valid question as to why the efforts by Pakistan in securing the border would cause a riot and uproar in Afghanistan. A step that should have been appreciated and should have seen as a measure against illegal border crossing, mainly to discourage the movement of alleged terrorists, was clearly not welcomed by Afghanistan.

Hardly a mile long area that was being barbed wire and fenced at different places by Pakistani border forces, was somehow seen as some kind of violation by Afghan government. It is ironic that while Pakistan is constantly being blamed and accused by Afghanistan for letting terrorist elements into the Afghan territory, and not doing enough to stop that, but when the Pakistani security forces took some concrete yet preliminary steps to address the situation, the move was highly discouraged by the Afghan government.

Afghanistan clearly needs to understand that security problems and threats are a mutual and shared concern of both the states. Pakistan is equally under a great stress economically and with regards to its national security and sovereignty at the hands of illegal Afghan refugees, who keep crossing over into Pakistan through Afghanistan, largely unchecked. Not just that but the fact that a large number of Afghan refugees residing inside Pakistan are still unregistered is what proving to be a constant source of threat to Pakistan's internal and external security.

Also Afghanistan needs to realize that the responsibility of securing the border against any illegal activity, movement and individual, does not just fall on Pakistan, rather the onus equally lies on the Afghan government too. It is non-sensical to keep voicing displeasure and dissatisfaction over the "supposed" weak measure along the Durand line. Unless and until the burden is shared by both with same commitment and honesty, the situation will likely to remain unchanged.

The porous nature of Pak-Afghan border is single most and major reason that makes it highly difficult to devise any effective mechanism for border security. The cultural, lingual and religious affiliation of the people living on both sides of border area makes these people sympathetic and hospitable towards each other. These are the locals who do not necessarily recognize the presence of a border between the two and have always been moving freely across the line unhindered and unchecked. These locals who may not even have any maleficent motives are generally found to be

disgruntled by these haphazard demarcations, hence do not appreciate the measures that would hamper their free movement.

Closely linked to this particular issue is another reality that the whole length of border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not very clearly demarcated, which again poses problems of identifying as to which part falls in the jurisdiction of which state. Nonetheless, Pakistan securing and fencing its own side of border should technically not trouble Afghanistan. Because this is a fact that the unhindered and unchecked movement across this border by terrorist, regular smuggling and abductions have played havoc with Pakistan's security. No country should deserve to be subjected to this treatment especially when it is hosting the other's biggest economic burden in form of refugees. Still Pakistan is accused, even though the most terrorist activities carried out on Pakistani soil have reported and found to be planned in Afghanistan.

The standoff also pointed to another alarming situation that how trigger ready Afghanistan is and how so skeptical their government is regarding any of the measures Pakistan takes. The deep seeded mistrust and the continuously deteriorating health of bilateral relations is further pushing the ties into a downward spiral, which got another shock with the killing of Mullah Mansour inside Pakistan, as is being claimed in the reports. Nonetheless both sides, especially Afghanistan needs to realize that the border problem and the closely associated terrorism will not be solved individually, rather dedicated and concerted efforts are required, with more and more transparency on both sides. Pakistan can definitely not be left alone, as it is part and parcel of this whole situation and the most victimized stakeholder as well.

The visit by US representative Mr. Richard Olson confirms that Pakistan's centrality for the peace in Afghanistan cannot be ignored. Only putting the blame on Pakistan and trying to isolate it, wouldn't help either side. Afghanistan needs to work towards mitigating Indian presence on its territory, under the influence of which, it has been sending individuals into Pakistan to carry out terrorist activities. Pakistan also needs to realize that geography has brought Pakistan and Afghanistan as neighbors to each other, and they can't do anything to change that. Keeping a prudent approach is the only key and way out. Pakistan doesn't want another "India" on its west, which Afghanistan has almost already become because of the continued Indian presence on its soil. So the improvement of diplomatic relations should always be given a priority.

The border security is going to remain a problem and merits strict measure by both the states against any illegal infiltration. Just like strict measures vis a vis Indian border, the same could be tried to apply in case of Afghanistan and Pakistan border too, with right security check and proper regulatory measures. Also the confidence of the people and their trust is needed to be won. Cultural, religious similarities and lingual affinities can still be cashed on in our favor. Now that Mullah Mansur is killed, one may expect more lash back, and even lesser chances for negotiations and more frequent terrorist movement across the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan.

Timely and stricter border security measures are surely what is needed more than ever before, when even the schools and universities and students in Pakistan, being a soft target, are regularly being

targeted. Sometimes sudden extreme measures are the only solution but still the option for talks should never be closed. No side could afford an active war.

<http://www.voiceofjournalists.com/pak-afghan-torkham-standoff-perils-of-border-security/>

The Dream of Durable Peace

Nasurullah Brohi

The constant efforts for enduring peace in Afghanistan, essential for the long term, has always been a collective effort of the Afghan government and international community.

A political process has attempted to overcome the chaos and conflict in Afghanistan by engaging the Afghan Taliban and the government in a series of negotiations. Previously the regional powers, as well as the United States, backed the peace talks with the Afghan Taliban as the 15 years of lasting war could not end the crisis. However, with the sudden revelation of Mullah Omar's death, the over-delayed peace process between the two parties once again is fuelling tension in the country and somehow also encouraging other militant groups to mark their place. Pakistan for this reason mediated a few rounds of these peace talks, but after Mullah Omar's death the talks were halted.

Through a mediatory role Pakistan twice endeavoured to engage the Afghan government and Taliban in a process of peace talks. Further supported by China and the US, both parties were urged to reach a consensus for a ceasefire and eventually engage in the confidence building measures (CBMs). However, the recent news of the Afghan Taliban supreme leader's death has once again put the goal of bringing peace in Afghanistan on hold. Previously under the leadership of Mullah Mansoor, the peace talks between the two were also obscure yet there was a ray of hope that they could move forward. The demands of Mullah Mansoor for a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan is considered an obstruction point since the US and its allies have not agreed a complete withdrawal of the ISAF forces, therefore the drag-on policy never allowed a successful peace process for Afghanistan.

Many pretend that the death of Mullah Mansoor may lead to temporary gains such as a cleft amongst different groups of the Taliban, free to reach any accord to develop a consensus about the policies of new leadership. However, the selection of Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada and his declaration of following his predecessor's policies may seem difficult for raising an option where the two sides find a face saving option. Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada was the former chief justice and head of the Ulema Council of Taliban therefore, his word and fatwa is largely acknowledged yet many still believe that his attitude, unlike Mullah Akhter Mansoor, is amenable to the possibility of joining the peace process to bring an end to the Afghan civil war.

The regional countries' role always holds a significant position while mediating the peace talks of Afghanistan. Since Pakistan had already played the mediator's role therefore, in the recent meeting in Islamabad of Afghan Ambassador Dr. Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's aide Sartaj Aziz, the main focus remained the prospects of the Afghan peace process following the death of Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour and the assumption of leadership by Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. Nevertheless, Pakistan considers the killing of Mullah Mansoor a major reason that thwarted peace efforts, particularly at a time when all parties along with China and the US were part of the process, further adding to the complexities of the Afghan conflict, only undermining the peace process.

The implications are already manifold and the killing of Mullah Akhter Mansoor badly affects the efforts of seeking a possible political solution essential to ending the enduring turmoil in the war-torn country. All the regional countries and the US advocate a politically negotiated settlement as the most viable option that could compel the two sides to move forward on the issue of Afghan peace and stability.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2016/04/30/less-explored-foreign-policy-options-connection-tapi-cpec-afghanistan/>