SVI FORESIGHT

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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 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

Pakistan's responsible nuclear diplomacy is apparent from its willingness to participate in nuclear dialogues and arms control initiatives both at the regional and international levels. One of the articles opines that Pakistan's recent proposal at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in the UN, Geneva is also a continuation of its responsible nuclear diplomacy urging the international community to take steps and develop consensus on arms control and disarmament. Furthermore, another article provides a deep insight into how India is quite frustrated amid a two-front challenge in the region arising from Pakistan and China. The author maintains that surprisingly, regardless of its much-hyped military prowess and preparedness the recent crises have proved India's inability to overcome a two-front and even a single-front challenge.

One of the authors highlights India's aspiration to dominate the South Asian cyber space by waging APT based cyber-attacks against Pakistan. This is aimed at challenging Pakistan's cyber security regime. Such Indian aspirations pose a threat to the overall national security of Pakistan. Similarly, India's pursuit of disruptive technologies along with its offensive nuclear posture would pose serious challenges to the strategic stability in South Asia. Author views that it would likely enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and speed of India's offensive nuclear weapons. Hence it would likely put a strain on existing nuclear deterrence in the region.

In this volume of the SVI Foresight, another very important subject is also discussed covering the debate around India's shift towards preemptive nuclear posture. It is opined that this shift in Indian nuclear doctrine seems to be purely Pakistan centric. This further exposes the Indian focus toward nuclear war-fighting rather than maintaining a deterrent posture. Furthermore, the emergent destabilizing factors of the South Asian strategic stability are deeply analyzed with a considerable focus on both regional and extra-regional aspects. The regional strategic stability has been significantly undermined by India's provocative war strategies and its offensive politico-strategic ambitions against Pakistan. In the same vein, very recently, in September this year, India claimed to have successfully tested hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV) as part of its aspiration to develop the next generation of hypersonic cruise missiles. The author views that India is quite eager to develop and ultimately deploy hypersonic weapons. In this regard, Pakistan needs to further develop a mechanism to address this emergent threat to maintain the nuclear deterrence equilibrium in the region.

India's hybrid warfare against Pakistan has been active for a long time, which in recent years has been evidently intensified by Indian involvement in terrorist activities in Pakistan. The article highlights that along with other components, India is also using information war as a major hybrid tool against Pakistan. Last but not the least, one of the contributors perceives the

strategic and economic significance of the South China Sea (SCS) as one of the major reasons for the growing Sino-US tensions in this region. In wake of the US-China growing tensions in the SCS, the US has been trying to re-align and re-adjust at the regional level to contain China in this region.

It is hoped that readers will find a good blend of articles focusing on various evolved aspects of the contemporary security discourse in South Asia.

The *SVI Foresight* team invites and highly encourages the contributions from the security and strategic community in the form of opinion based short commentaries on contemporary political, security, and strategic issues. Any suggestions for further improvements are welcome at our contact address. Please see here the copy of the *SVI Foresight* electronic journal. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter and can also access the SVI website.

Research Associate

Haris Bilal Malik

Pakistan's Nuclear Diplomacy: Commitment towards Non-Proliferation

Sher Bano

Ever since Pakistan became a nuclear weapon state, Pakistan's nuclear diplomacy has been in practice on the principles of restraint and responsibility. Pakistan was even reluctant to enter the club of nuclear weapon states but soon after India had conducted its first nuclear test in the year 1974, going nuclear became Pakistan's strategic compulsion. India's series of nuclear tests in 1998 had compelled Pakistan to demonstrate its nuclear weapon capability accordingly to restore the strategic balance in South Asia. The development of Pakistan's nuclear weapon capability primarily serves the purpose of a credible and reliable defence against the existential threat from India and to maintain peace and stability in the region. After the inevitable nuclearization of South Asia, Pakistan has never been a part of any arms race in South Asia. Pakistan can neither afford and nor have an intent to indulge in an arms race in the region. This is evident from the very fact that Pakistan has always been open for dialogues and arms control initiatives at the regional and international levels. In this regard, Pakistan's recent proposal at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva is also part of its responsible nuclear diplomacy to urge the international community to take steps and develop consensus on arms control and disarmament. These factors show Pakistan's commitment and adherence to achieve the goal of nuclear non-proliferation.

As part of its non-proliferation efforts, in the past, Pakistan had also proposed various Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) at the regional level. For instance, in 1974 Pakistan had proposed to make South Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ), in 1978 proposal for the joint Indo-Pak declaration renouncing the manufacture and acquisition of nuclear weapons was presented. Similarly, in 1979 Pakistan had proposed the mutual inspection of each other's nuclear facilities to build confidence and promote transparency. Moreover, being a responsible international player, in 1979 Pakistan had proposed to simultaneously sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) along with India as non-nuclear-weapon states. In 1988 Pakistan had proposed a bilateral treaty to ban the nuclear tests to elude overt nuclearization and reduce the nuclear risk. With the high risk attached to the emerging technologies and delivery systems, in 1994 Pakistan had proposed the South Asia zero-missile zone. Hence over the period, Pakistan has continued its efforts towards nuclear CBMs by proposing various regional and bilateral non-proliferation initiatives. These were aimed at strengthening strategic stability and to reduce the risk of any nuclear conflict in the region. Unfortunately, India has always shown a negative attitude to all such proposals and disrupted various technical, political, and strategic

level talks on nuclear CBMs. This historical evidence further validates Pakistan's appropriate nuclear diplomacy and enhances its credibility as a responsible nuclear-weapon state.

In continuation of its responsible nuclear diplomacy, most recently at the plenary meeting of CD, being held in June 2020, Pakistan has put forth its concerns regarding the nuclear disarmament. While speaking at the conference, Pakistan's permanent representative to CD Ambassador Khalil Hashmi deliberated upon that with the emerging global conflicts, the consensus on non-proliferation and disarmament has also abraded. The likelihood of a resumption of nuclear testing by countries like the USA, Russia, and India and increased prospects of nuclear use has made the global arms control regime dormant. The increasing trend of double standards and discrimination of the western countries was also highlighted. It was pointed out that the politics of granting waivers to certain states particularly India serves as one of the reasons that the confidence in the nuclear non-proliferation regime has eroded. India's aspiration of regional hegemony and aggressive military posture against Pakistan are the main contributing factors towards instability and turbulence in South Asia. Moreover, India's non- compliance with international law has emboldened it to intimidate its neighboring countries and to continue its brutalities in the Kashmir region. India's irresponsible and incendiary rhetoric combined with its enhanced and aggressive nuclear capabilities is a huge threat to regional peace and security.

To address the above concerns, Pakistan has outlined eleven points roadmap to build the global consensus on non-proliferation. Some of the important steps include; the 'right of equal security for all states' in both conventional and non-conventional domains at the national and international levels. The SSOD-I (Special Session on disarmament) has unanimously agreed to this principle of equal security. This shows that Pakistan's nuclear diplomacy and its non-proliferation efforts have been acknowledged at such an international forum. Another pragmatic step would be that through a non-discriminatory Fissile Material Treaty, all the states must eliminate the current fissile material stock and abandon future production. Likewise, all non-nuclear-weapon states must be provided with security assurances until nuclear disarmament is achieved. A non-discriminatory and universal agreement must be developed to address the concerns regarding the proliferation and development of ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) systems. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen laws to prevent the militarization of outer space and development of LAWS (Lethal Autonomous Weapons System) to be brought under international regulation. Hence to deal with the existing and future challenges to nuclear non-proliferation, international efforts are needed to rethink and re-evaluate the foundations of the non-proliferation regime.

Hence, in this nuclear age, global strategic stability cannot be achieved through discriminatory non-proliferation measures. There is a need for an enabling environment at both the global and regional levels for successful nuclear non-proliferation engagements. In South Asia, India's

offensive doctrines of a limited war under a nuclear overhang, nuclear brinkmanship, and notions of a splendid first strike have posed a serious threat to regional security. In this regard, CBMs and crisis control along with nuclear risk reduction are direly needed to help reinstate a stable regional nuclear order. This would likely serve the key to enduring peace and stability. Despite India's perilous and pessimist role in the non-proliferation realm, Pakistan should continue to act responsibly and maintain a constructive and responsible nuclear diplomacy.

http://southasiajournal.net/pakistans-nuclear-diplomacy-commitment-towards-non-proliferation/

Indian Cyber Threats and APTs Posing Challenges to Pakistan

Basma Khalil

In recent years, cyber threats, from replicating program software to a ransom-worm, have evolved into Advanced Persistent threats (APTs). These are pre-planned cyber-attacks aimed at penetrating the adversary's central communication servers to seize or hack important information stored there. APTs are prolonged targeted attacks against a network to access the data and create points to re-access the main servers and websites. They are believed to be one of the most lethal and complex cyber tools being used in cyber warfare nowadays. South Asia has also been impacted by these threats where India is actively involved in waging APT based cyber-attacks against Pakistan for a long time. This would likely undermine Pakistan's cyber security regime which can ultimately pose threat to the overall national security.

In the cyber domain, cyber algorithms can be utilized to provide security against APTs. These algorithms can analyze the complex pattern of data along with the vulnerabilities inside a network. Though the machine learning algorithms have become modernized, cyber hackers have also developed more complex cyber techniques to avoid such algorithms. As a result, cyber-crime techniques have evolved into more complex cyber warfare tools. While investing in these complex cyber technologies, India has been involved in using APTs as a cyber-warfare toll against Pakistan to spy on data and information. In this regard, recently in August 2020 an APT based cyber-attack was carried out by India against Pakistan. This was intended to hack the electronic and technical gadgets of the government officials by using deceitful fabrication as one of the techniques. However, the attempt was timely identified by the concerned Pakistani agencies and the prospective damage was avoided. Such attempts indicate that India aspires to dominate in this complex domain as well.

It would be important to highlight that online networks including the social media forums, due to their easy access are quite vulnerable to APTs. Likewise, with an increased dependence on computers and soft wares by the government and private organizations; the nature of cyber threats has become more sophisticated. These sophisticated threats involve the use of complex techniques like; magecart, credentials stuffing, and weaponized documents. Furthermore, the emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) systems has transformed the world into a hyper globe. In this regard, ZDNet, an online forum dealing with business technology analytics, in one of its assessments of 2019 has claimed that IoT has opened new ways for cyber exploitation. Such hyper-connectivity has made the cyber echo system more vulnerable to cyber threats especially the APTs.

Given the complexity of the cyber threats, a thorough understanding of the overall system capacity and the integrated soft wares would form the very basis of an appropriate response. At the very least, the installation of reliable anti-viruses, the creation of private firewalls, setting up of intrusion prevention systems, provision of VPNs, and email protection filters to avoid spam emails is very a common and easy solution. This would likely serve the purpose of protection from the unwanted infected files and the security of the whole network would not be compromised. However, these measures are not enough in wake of the sophisticated nature of APTs especially coming from India. No matter how up to date soft wares are, there is a constant need to keep a strict check on incoming and outgoing data so that the unknown access attempts could be monitored. Moreover, the utilization of numerous defense layers such as system-level, network level, application level, and transmission level would also serve the purpose. As a next step, the two-step authentication and verification step need to be more adopted to prevent any prospective breach. Besides the above-mentioned solutions, "Perimeter Security" is also one of the reliable solutions against APTs. It works on the principle of strict protocols of verification and granting access to the data flow to the devices that are already connected to the network or request to access the network.

Hence, in South Asia, India's aspiration for dominance in the cyber space has urged it to carry out cyber-attacks against Pakistan. This has posed a serious threat to Pakistan in the cyber realm, as India is fully equipped with sophisticated cyber tools. India is actively involved in using the APTs for cyber espionage and cyber harassment against Pakistan. India's APT attacks are intended to manipulate the information and fuel propaganda to achieve the ultimate strategic goals of damaging Pakistan. This would compel Pakistan to further enhance its cyber security capabilities vis-à-vis this emergent non-traditional security threat. Pakistan needs to further encourage and facilitate its IT graduates and professionals to coupe up with the international practices of cyber security. In this regard; Pakistan's recent initiative PIAIC (Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence and Computing) is worth considering. Along with other provisions, it is aimed at providing expertise in the internet of things (IoT), cloud computing, and training to the IT graduates and professionals. This would likely further enhance Pakistan's capabilities to overcome cyber threats arising from India. Last but not the least, given the vulnerability of online forums to APTs, monitoring protocols on the data flow on social media and other online forums are needed to be adopted further. The number of online users should be monitored under legal regulatory bodies to avoid chaos and criminal activities in cyber space and to lessen the impacts of APTs posed by India. Similarly, it would be much helpful to utilize the national print and broadcast media to create awareness in this regard.

http://southasiajournal.net/indian-cyber-threats-and-apts-posing-challenges-to-pakistan/

India's Frustration amid a Two-Front Challenge

Haris Bilal Malik

Since the last few decades, India is in pursuit of enhancing its global strategic outlook. This is intended at India's long term aspiration of becoming a regional, and ultimately a global power. To achieve this goal, India has been trying to expand its military, economic and political influence in the region and beyond. However, at the same time, India has been facing a two-front challenge in the region arising mainly from Pakistan and China. To meet this challenge, India has held a desire to fight a two-front war with both countries simultaneously. In this regard, India has been enhancing its conventional and unconventional military capabilities accordingly. These include; increasing its military size, enhancing its conventional military capabilities with the acquisition of advanced weaponry from its strategic partners, and most significantly maintaining an offensive nuclear posture. This preparedness is aimed at fighting and even deterring a full-fledged war or limited conflict with Pakistan and China respectively. Contrary to such hype and notion, India has not yet succeeded in deterring either of its adversaries with its military prowess in recent conflicts. Surprisingly, it is the other way around; as the recent crises have proved India's inability to overcome a two-front and even a single-front challenge. This has raised serious questions on India's claim of an overwhelming military preparedness to fight a two-front war.

The security environment of the South Asian region has become more complex since the year 2019. This is primarily because of the Indian military offensive in Kashmir and its unilateral move to politically annex this disputed region. This has further vindicated Kashmir's potential as a 'nuclear flash-point' between India and Pakistan. The latest rounds of tensions in the region include; a deadly clash between India and China in the disputed Ladakh region and the worst exchange of hostilities during the Pulwama-Balakot crisis of 2019 between India and Pakistan. Both crises have considerably changed the strategic balance of South Asia in favour of Pakistan and China respectively. Moreover, in the wake of the humiliating fate for India which has come out of these recent crises, its much-hyped aspiration to fight a two-front war against Pakistan and China has become a nightmare for India. Likewise, it seems like that India's strategic elite is quite frustrated vis-à-vis this self-proclaimed notion. This frustration is further evident from the recent Indian assertions of keeping the war hysteria alive against both the countries and particularly against Pakistan.

Most recently, in August 2020, India's first-ever Chief of the Defence Staff; General Bipin Rawat has threatened Pakistan with 'heavy losses' in case of any conflict. He further asserted that the Indian military is prepared for the possibility to fight a two-front war against Pakistan and China. To further assert the two-front notion, this has prompted the Indian Army and the Air Force chiefs to visit the conflict zones. In this regard, the Indian Army Chief General MM

Naravane has recently visited the Ladakh region along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The visit was aimed at depicting the presence of Indian forces at the strategic heights in Galwan valley as a military advantage against Chinese forces there. Likewise, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria, the Indian Air Chief has also visited the front line air bases in the region. This was a demonstration to assess the operational readiness and preparedness of the Indian Air Force at these bases as they are supposed to face China. The timing of these assertions and gestures are quite significant given the recent crisis along both the LAC and LOC. Similarly, General Rawat has also warned China that India is capable enough to deal with any aggression led by China. He reiterated that the Indian military is in a position to deal with the challenges coming from both frontiers. Nevertheless, the humiliating outcomes of the recent crises show that the notion of a two-front challenge is more of a jingoistic approach rather than a practical and reliable resort to respond. The very fact remains that India did not manage to deter both Pakistan and China against its provocative actions.

It is worth mentioning here that the notion of a two-front challenge is primarily one of the main reasons behind the Indian extensive acquisition of advanced military hardware from countries like the US, Russia, France, and Israel. In this regard, India's eagerness to acquire the S-400 missile system from Russia and the Rafale jets from France is quite significant. This is evident from the expected deployment of S-400 along the borders with both Pakistan and China once the system becomes operational. Also, India has requested Russia to speed up the delivery of the S-400 system in the wake of the ongoing conflict in Ladakh. It would form a multilayered air defence shield against the two-front aerial threats. Similarly, the need for Rafales in the Indian Air Force inventory was deliberately emphasized after the humiliating aerial defeat received from Pakistan during the Pulwama-Balakot crisis of 2019. This is evident from the statements of Prime Minister Modi and Air Chief Marshal (R) BS Dhanoa, the then Indian Air Chief. Both were obsessed to a level that if India had Rafales during the crisis the results would have been different. In the same vein, quite recently, the way in which the delivery of the first batch of Rafale jets was celebrated, it has shown the politico-strategic significance of these jets for the Indian notion of a two-front war. However, regardless of this preparedness, China is still dominating the battlefield in the Ladakh region as evident from recent media reports. This has further added up to the frustration of India amid a two-front challenge.

As long as India has a troubled relationship with both of its neighbours Pakistan and China, the possibility of a two-front war would remain a 'Sword of Damocles' for India. Since India already fears a two-front war; this has become a nightmare for Indian military and political top brass. Similarly, India's on ground readiness and military preparedness to fight such a war seem to be only a verbal gymnastic. The fact remains that the Indian frustration amid this challenge has notably increased as evident from the recent crisis as well. Last but not the least, Pakistan and China needs to further expand the scope of their strategic partnership with a more focus to counter Indian offensive moves and doctrines.

http://southasiajournal.net/indias-frustration-amid-a-two-front-challenge/

Indian Pursuit of Disruptive Technologies and Its Implications on Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia

Ahyousha Khan

The term disruptive technology was first coined by a Harvard Business School Professor, Clayton Christensen in his book "The Innovator Dilemma". According to the book, disruptive technologies could revolutionize the specific fields in which they are to be adopted. However, disruptive technologies also come with many risks attached because they are new, untested, and have limited scope. In the field of defence and security, disruptive technologies can be defined as "technology or a set of technologies applied to a relevant problem in a manner that radically alters the symmetry of military power between the competitors," and "resultantly out-dates the doctrines, policies, and strategies of all the organizations and actors involved". According to this definition, if any state successfully develops disruptive technologies and uses them against its adversaries, the balance of military power would likely tilt in its favor. Moreover, to deploy and counter these technologies states require new doctrines and policies. Technologies such as the ubiquitous robot, bot swarms, and mixed teams, automated decision making, artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, virtual reality, big data analytics, small satellites, 5G/6G technology, and quantum computing, are considered as few of the disruptive technologies that have revolutionized warfare and security. In South Asia, India, under its offensive military doctrines, aspires to develop disruptive technologies. Indian pursuit of these technologies would likely pose serious challenges to the deterrence and strategic stability in South Asia.

It is quite noteworthy that recently, Indian Army Chief Gen. M. Naravane while addressing a seminar at the Army War College in Mhow has urged Indian Armed forces to utilize the indigenously developed dual-use disruptive technologies. His statement reflects two points; one India's pursuit for disruptive technologies, second India's focus to indigenously develop these technologies. This is further evident from the recent ban imposed by the Indian Ministry of Defence to import on 101 military systems and weapons, which includes missiles, lightweight aircrafts, helicopters, and submarines. With India building and deploying these technologies under its offensive military doctrines, South Asia's strategic stability would be in serious jeopardy. These technologies can blur the lines between conventional and strategic warfare, and peacetime and wartime. Moreover, they can also create discrimination in the military powers of the states. This would ultimately increase the probability of first-strike between asymmetric military powers. In the South Asian context, India with its attempts to exploit levels below the nuclear threshold has become a liability in the success of deterrence stability.

The long-desired peace in South Asia has been primarily ensured with Pakistan's nuclear deterrence in response to India's offensive nuclear posture. The broader discourse on Deterrence in South Asia has mostly evolved and developed after the mid-1980s. Though the South Asian model of nuclear deterrence is not the exact replication of the Cold- War deterrence, it has taken its course in the process of evolution. After the overt nuclearization of South Asia in 1998, it was generally believed that fear of 'Mutual Assured Destruction' (MAD) would serve as a stabilizing factor. Likewise, the evolution of the regional strategic discourse has shown that though nuclear deterrence has stopped India to wage a conventional war, the Indian desire for a low-intensity conflict below Pakistan's nuclear threshold is quite evident. In this regard, India's limited war doctrines, which it hopes would not challenge Pakistan's nuclear threshold have created deterrence instability in the region. Evidence comes from how over the years, India has been asserting the notions of its so-called 'surgical strikes' and self-proclaimed 'new normal'. Furthermore, it has also indoctrinated such notions in its subsequent Joint Armed Forces and the Land Warfare Doctrines. Consequently, the burden of maintaining deterrence and strategic stability in the region has befallen on Pakistan. Since India is continuously involved in exploring space for low-intensity conflicts below the nuclear threshold of Pakistan, some of the disruptive technologies, like cyber warfare would provide the avenue for it. While some of them like AI, swarms, sensors, and satellites will "erode the foundation of nuclear deterrence" by improving the weapons accuracy, and remote sensing.

The use of emerging disruptive technologies in military systems and structures is an undeniable reality. In South Asia, this would undermine the nuclear deterrence equilibrium because it would further enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and speed of India's offensive military systems, and weapons. Though Pakistan's nuclear deterrence has effectively deterred the chances of all-out war in South Asia, India's pursuit of disruptive technologies would likely put a strain on existing nuclear deterrence in the region. Therefore, Pakistan might need to further strengthen as well its conventional deterrence vis-à-vis India. Given the economic difficulties, the prospects of this are not so favorable at least for the time being. In the longer term, Pakistan would be compelled to considerably invest in disruptive technologies to thwart India's attempts of challenging Pakistan's nuclear threshold. Nevertheless, Pakistan's existing nuclear Posture would continue playing the role of credible deterrence against the wide spectrum of threats coming from India. Also, the prospects of the regional arms control would become more unlikely once India would integrate the disruptive technologies with its offensive nuclear posture. This would have severe implications for the existing deterrence equation in South Asia.

https://www.eurasiareview.com/24092020-indian-pursuit-of-disruptive-technologies-and-its-implications-on-nuclear-deterrence-in-south-asia-oped/

Evolution of Indian Nuclear Doctrine: From NFU to Preemption

Sher Bano

India's obscure nuclear doctrine of 'No First Use' (NFU) had evolved over the years since it was first declared in 1999 by NSAB's (Nuclear Security Advisory Board) in the 'Draft Nuclear Doctrine' (DND) that forms the very basis of the official Indian nuclear doctrine. Subsequently, in 2003 after a review by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) the DND had emerged as India's official nuclear doctrine. However, the later developments are quite evident that India has shifted its nuclear posture from NFU to preemption. In August 2019, a statement made by Mr. Rajnath Singh (Indian Defence Minister) made headlines amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan, the two arch-rivals in South Asia. This was an assertion of India's likely shift from its long doubted NFU policy. This has further exposed the pretense of India's NFU policy, to which Pakistan has never given any credence. This shift in Indian nuclear doctrine seems to be purely Pakistan centric. Such an Indian shift is further evidence of India's focus towards nuclear war-fighting rather than maintaining deterrence. In the wake of the evolved tensions in the region, India's offensive nuclear posture of preemption would have dire implications for the strategic stability of South Asia.

Over the period, various statements by the Indian government officials and prominent academicians have raised serious concerns over India's adherence to the NFU policy. In 2010 Shivshankar Menon, the then National Security Advisor of India stated that according to Indian nuclear doctrine NFU policy is meant only for non-nuclear-weapon states. Hence, it implies that using a nuclear weapon could be a resort against nuclear-weapon states, particularly against Pakistan. Later on, in 2016 Manohar Prakar the then Indian Defence Minister questioned "Why do lots of people say that India is for no first use? Why should I blind myself?" Moreover, in 2017 a prominent Indian scholar, Vipin Narang while speaking at the conference at Carnegie stated that India would not let Pakistan go first. These assertions are quite evident that in a crisis, India might take a nuclear first strike against Pakistan. Such drifts in Indian policy have further enhanced Pakistan's threat perception vis-à-vis India. Similarly, Pakistan would be further compelled to maintain a credible nuclear deterrence posture to overcome India's offensive nuclear posturing.

India's pursuit of offensive nuclear capabilities further reveals its aspirations of a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Pakistan. This, for instance, is further evident from the fact that India has been involved in developing ground-based and space-based surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence capabilities, and new precision weaponry for the last few years. These would further embolden India to take any move toward pre-emption or first use. In the same vein, India's adoption of Pakistan specific policy of first use would likely result in the lowering of the Indian nuclear threshold. This might bring serious implications for Pakistan's existing nuclear

deterrent posture which covers a broad spectrum of threats coming from India including its conventional advantage. It would further generate an unnecessary arms race in the region and might force Pakistan to further revisit its doctrinal and force posture vis-à-vis India's notions of preemptions. The likelihood of India's shift towards preemption would also mean that India's nuclear weapons would be kept in the state of readiness. This would also increase the risk of unauthorized or accidental use of Indian nuclear weapons. Such a scenario would likely create a complex security dilemma for Pakistan, thus undermining the deterrence equilibrium in South Asia, primarily ensured by Pakistan's nuclear capabilities.

In recent years, India's massive naval buildup is also aimed at maintaining an offensive sea-based nuclear posture. In this regard, India's acquisition of SSBNs (nuclear-powered submarines) is quite significant since along with the assurance of second-strike capability, they are also meant to be used to launch a multitude of nuclear weapons. Other than that, India has been maintaining an operational BMD (Ballistic Missile Defence) system; also, it would have the most advanced anti-missile systems like the Russian S-400 in its inventory very soon. Hence, having been assured that it would be protected against any counter-strike by Pakistan by its BMD systems; India might potentially launch a land, sea, or air-based pre-emptive strike against Pakistan. This would create a false sense of security among the Indian decision-makers and they might act aggressively in the time of crisis. Pakistan needs to keep a close eye on India's shifting nuclear policy to counter the probability of a nuclear first strike initiated by India. Pakistan has already developed MIRV (Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle) capable short and medium-range ballistic missiles. Apart from that Pakistan has also developed a sea-based delivery system such as Babur-3, a Submarine Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) which is aimed at ensuring a credible second-strike capability. These would serve as a reliable and credible deterrent against Indian notions of preemption.

Hence, at the present, the assertions of Indian officials to abandon the long doubted NFU policy and a move towards pre-emption is mere irresponsible and belligerent behavior. India in its pursuit to become a regional hegemon would destabilize the already conflict-prone South Asian region by further provoking an arms race. Pakistan needs to further increase international pressure by highlighting India's aggressive and irresponsible nuclear posturing. The world needs to know that India's shift from NFU is merely reckless and dangerous. On the other hand, Pakistan also needs to ensure its safety by further enhancing its assured second-strike capability and acquiring advanced BMDs while staying within its existing posture of minimum credible deterrence.

https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/09/29/evolution-of-indian-nuclear-doctrine-from-nfu-to-preemption/

The Evolved Destabilizing Factors of South Asian Strategic Stability

Haris Bilal Malik

The strategic stability of the South Asian region has been in a continuous state of vulnerability in recent years. Various factors have contributed towards destabilizing this region. At the military and strategic level, these include; the conventional disparity between India and Pakistan, India's offensive military modernization drive, India's evolved nuclear posture, and its aspiration to politically dominate the region. In addition to these, the Kashmir issue has been the most crucial factor in this regard which is widely believed to be a 'nuclear flash-point' between India and Pakistan. At the political front, India has held a dream of getting a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Though very unlikely to succeed, such aspiration would also destabilize the region as a whole. Apart from these factors, the US-Russia growing strategic competition in South Asia, as evident by the enhanced defence collaborations of both countries with India has also destabilized the region. Moreover, India's desire to dominate the escalation ladder has become more frequent in recent years, especially since the year 2019. All these factors combined have made the South Asian security dynamics more complex. Such a volatile situation would have long-lasting implications for regional security and strategic stability.

The military equation of South Asia, which India has been trying for long to dominate and readjust in its favor, remains one of the driving factors of the instability in the region. There are key determinants of this, like for instance, the conventional advantage of India vis-à-vis Pakistan, and India's offensive nuclear posture. Moreover, the acquisition of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) and the Anti-Missile systems like the Russian S-400 along with the development of supersonic and hypersonic technologies have further added to the volatility of the region. Indian attempts to change the South Asian military equation in its favor have created a dangerous atmosphere of destabilization in the region. These Indian notions are considerably dominating the regional security environment especially in the absence of a crisis stability mechanism. The resultant action-reaction spiral between India and Pakistan over the last few years has been adversely affecting the already fragile South Asian region.

Over the last few years, India has been continuously working to enhance its counter-force offensive military capabilities against Pakistan. This is further evident from the recent technological developments which Indian has been carrying out. Like for instance, the space capabilities for intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) purposes, a technologically advanced fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, and achieving anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons capability are quite significant. These technological developments indicate that India wants to

deliberately destabilize the strategic stability of the South Asian region. Furthermore, at the doctrinal level, there are various offensive war-fighting doctrines that India wants to pursue against Pakistan. These include the much-hyped Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) of 2004, and the recent Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces (JDIAF) of 2017, and the Land Warfare Doctrine of 2018. These offensive doctrines provide documented evidence of India's desire to dominate the escalation ladder in the region which would ultimately destabilize the region.

In the same vein, the Indian self-proclaimed notions of 'surgical strikes' and 'new normal' under a nuclear scenario are notably significant when the destabilizing factors of the South Asian strategic stability are to be analyzed. This has been evident from the threatening assertions of Indian political and military top brass on various occasions with such preemptions. The aggressive and provocative policies of India demonstrate that it has an ambition of achieving escalation dominance in South Asia at the cost of destabilizing the region. Based on India's provocative and threatening strategies, there has been a continuous fear of war and conflict in South Asia. In the worst-case scenario, such a provocative conflict, contrary to Indian estimates, might not remain limited to sub-conventional or low-intensity level. It would likely challenge Pakistan's nuclear threshold which already covers a broad spectrum of threats coming from India.

The evolved security dynamics of the disputed Kashmir region since the year 2019 have once again become a global concern. There has been an increase in Indian brutalities in the Kashmir region which considerably holds a prospective fear of a nuclear confrontation between the two countries especially against the backdrop of the Pulwama-Balakot crisis of February 2019. Similarly, the subsequent revocation of the special constitutional status of Kashmir by India in August 2019 has further added to the volatility and destabilization of the region. Regardless of the criticism worldwide, India had imposed a lockdown in the region which remains imposed to date. This demonstrates that India wants to dominate the region with its provocative strategies. The significance of the Kashmir issue for the South Asian strategic stability is quite evident from the very fact that it has remained a crucial agenda item during the UNGA 74th session last year and also during the ongoing UNGA 75th session this year. During these sessions, Prime Minister Imran Khan has successfully drawn the attention of the international community towards this long-standing issue. Also, during these sessions of two consecutive years, other prominent leaders of the world have condemned the Indian brutalities in the occupied Kashmir and emphasized its peaceful resolution under the UN mandate.

Hence at the present, the South Asian strategic stability has been considerably undermined by India's provocative war strategies and its offensive politico-strategic ambitions against Pakistan. In these circumstances, Pakistan's threat perception would likely remain more inclined towards India. Furthermore, the prevailing conventional asymmetry in South Asia has motivated India to embark upon its limited war agenda against Pakistan. India believes this would not challenge

Pakistan's nuclear threshold. It seems that while having a conventional advantage, India has been deliberately trying to change the nuclear deterrence equation in its favor as well. However, India's hegemonic aspirations would likely provoke Pakistan to further intensify its nuclear threshold. Pakistan needs to further maintain a stable and credible nuclear deterrence approach. In this regard, an assertive manifestation of the nuclear doctrinal posture along with the technological sophistication seems to be a plausible way-out.

https://www.eurasiareview.com/30092020-the-evolved-destabilizing-factors-of-south-asian-strategic-stability-oped/

India's Active Hybrid War against Pakistan

Basma Khalil

Hybrid warfare is an emergent domain in which irregular means of war fighting against the adversary state are used rather than a formal declaration of war. It has extended the battlefield to almost every segment of states and their societies as opposed to traditionally being restricted to be fought between the militaries. In South Asia, India's active hybrid war has been intensified in recent years. This intensification, along with other Indian aspirations is also significant for India because, since the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pakistan, the chances of an all-out war in South Asia have been eliminated. This seems to be one of the reasons behind a considerable increase in the hybrid and indirect threats from India. In recent years, India's grave agenda to destabilize Pakistan has taken more momentum. In this regard, along with other components, India has been using information war as a major hybrid tool against Pakistan. This is further aimed at radicalizing the Pakistani society and ultimately achieving the goal of damaging Pakistan. This would likely serve as one of the major security challenges coming from India in the years to come.

To further intensify its Hybrid agenda against Pakistan, in 2014, the [Doval Doctrine](Defense Offensive Doctrine) was formally introduced by India. This doctrine aims at destabilization and demoralization of Pakistan both internally and externally. In this regard, the arrest of an Indian spy [Kalbushan Jhadav] (a serving Indian Navy Officer) back in 2016 by Pakistan's security forces is quite significant. His confession of involvement in terrorist and other sabotage activities in Karachi and Balochistan is also on record. Likewise, the recent attempt to attack the [Pakistan Stock Exchange] building in Karachi in June this year is also believed to be backed by India. Though the attempt was immediately neutralized by the Pakistani security forces, it reflects the rapid augmentation of the Indian hybrid war agenda to destabilize Pakistan. Moreover, India's continuous lobbying in FATF to discredit Pakistan is also an example of its active hybrid campaign against Pakistan. However, the reality is the other way around, in fact, it is India that has been sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan and is involved in illicit activities. This is further evident from the [recent record released by the US Department of Treasury's FinCEN] according to which, India has been involved in financial support to terrorism.

Due to the hyper and overflow of fabricated information, the nature of hybrid war has become more complex. Presently numerous events have taken place in Pakistan which include; propaganda against armed forces, sectarian conflicts, blasphemy cases, and bomb blasts for which India is believed to be at back. Moreover, the Social media forums are widely being used by India to propagate the anti-Pakistan narrative and radicalize the general masses in Pakistan. To further pursue its hybrid agenda against Pakistan, India has been actively involved in [the

development of fake websites and think-tanks pages (approximately network of 265 websites) which are aimed at lobbying against Pakistan's interests in key European countries.

In recent years Pakistan has been cognizant and aware of the Indian hybrid threats aimed at damaging its national security. In this regard, quite recently, on 6th September 2020, Pakistan's Chief of the Army Staff, General Qamar Javaid Bajwa while addressing a ceremony has stated that the enemy is active to defame and destabilize Pakistan. He has also opined that the people of Pakistan have to stand united against the hybrid war and must preserve the state interests. This statement reflects that Pakistan's strategy to counter the threats of hybrid warfare lies with its people since India's hybrid campaign has been revolving around targeting the general public. Furthermore, the government has already taken an initiative through the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to inform the public about fake news and defaming propaganda against Pakistan. To further deal with the covert Indian hybrid war agenda Pakistan needs to further boost up such initiatives.

Pakistan's response to India's propaganda after the Pulwama-Balakot crisis was quite appropriate if analyzed in the context of the Indian hybrid warfare against Pakistan. For instance, Pakistan has nullified India's propaganda of targeting a terrorist camp in Balakot and killing more than 300 terrorists by visual images and satellite imagery. Likewise, it has further gained international recognition of the Kashmir issue as a human rights issue that needs the attention of the international community. These narratives have been a reflection of Pakistan's efforts to propagate a real scenario of the situation contrary to the Indian hybrid and propaganda warfare.

Hence, Pakistan has been facing security challenges from both East and the West arising from the Indo-Afghan nexus. At the same time, it has been compelled to deal with the hybrid war that has been imposed by India. At the borders, it could be an easy task to defend because the targets are known. However, fighting a hybrid war is considered difficult due to the complex nature of techniques being employed. India has been employing hybrid warfare techniques against Pakistan for a long time, which in recent years has been intensified by sponsoring terrorist activities and media propaganda against Pakistan to destabilize it. However, Pakistan has successfully mitigated the Indian imposed hybrid war and propaganda. As hybrid warfare is more about narratives rather than the actual use of force, Pakistan needs to come up with more proactive strategies to counter the active hybrid war imposed by India.

http://southasiajournal.net/indias-active-hybrid-war-against-pakistan/

Importance of the South China Sea for the US and China and their Growing Tensions

Irfan Ali

The South China Sea (SCS) has great strategic and economic significance in the contemporary international politico-security environment. At the economic front, it is estimated that an annual global trade of $5.3 trillion passes through the SCS. Besides, more than half of the world's fishing vessels pass through the SCS. This implies that millions of people are dependent on the SCS when it comes to their food and livelihoods. Along with this, the SCS is also rich in natural resources; for instance, a large amount of oil and natural gas reserves have been discovered so far. It is further believed that yet it contains a huge reserve beneath its seabed. The strategic and economic importance of SCS is one of the major reasons for growing Sino-US tensions over time. China holds a legitimate claim over various parts of the SCS. The US on the other hand, aspired by its global hegemony considers China as a considerable threat to its dominance and influence in this part of the world. These factors combined have contributed towards the US trying to re-aligning and re-adjusting at the regional level to contain China throughout the South China Sea.

The SCS holds great significance for China because of multiple factors. The first and foremost factor in this regard is the Spratly Islands, which has great strategic importance for China. As per the Chinese principled stance which is based on strong historical and undeniable facts, these islands have been part of its territory. China further maintains that it has full and legitimate control of these islands. Similarly, China has been willing to solve the bilateral claim issues with other claimant regional states. By doing so, China would be in a position to claim jurisdiction on adjacent waters under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). However, the provocative military presence of the US in the SCS would further compel China to follow the same suit. Moreover, since most of China's trade passes through the SCS, it would be more desirable for China to have this region to be conflict-free for a safe passage. As far as the interests of the US in the SCS are concerned, they can be divided into three broad categories. First, the economic interests of the US have been tied to sea-lanes of the SCS. Second, at the military level, the US has been strengthening its ties with its regional security partners to counter China. Third, the US, being a globally dominant power, wants to maintain its influence and turn the balance of power into its favor in the pretext of respect for international law and the role of security guarantor to the regional states. These factors indicate the complicated nature of the clash of interests of both the US and China in the SCS region.

The recent round of tensions between the US and China in the SCS have brought both the countries once again at loggers head. On August 18, 2020, the US navy conducted drills in the SCS within 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of China. It was perceived as a highly offensive move by the US since it was the first time when the US Navy's USS Musting Destroyer has gone through the median line that divides the mainland China and Taiwan. In the same vein, a US military/spy plane "E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System Aircraft" was spotted flying over the SCS on August 5, 2020. Similarly back in July 2020, two aircraft carriers and four other warships of the US Navy have conducted drills in the SCS. On April 22, 2020, the US deployed one of its latest naval assault ships, the "USS America" in the SCS.

Meanwhile, the US despite knowing the Chinese 'One-China' principled stance on Taiwan, has deliberately enhanced its defence ties with Taiwan especially in recent years along with its support for the Independence of Taiwan. China considers that such provocations would threaten the peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, the US has much deeper involvement in the SCS because of the factor called 'China Fear' which refers to the fear of the US that has emerged from the economic and military rise of China. Furthermore, the evolved situation in the SCS also seems like one of the reasons behind the Chinese move to develop a more safe and secure trade route in the form of CPEC under its BRI initiative. This evolved Chinese model of economic integration has further feared the US that in the coming years it might not be in a position to contain China at the economic front.

Hence summarizing it all, it is quite evident that China is being threatened by the US in the South China Sea. The US has been maintaining a provocative military presence in the region to project its military supremacy and influence. China on the other hand still holds a very principled stance of justified ownership of 80% of the SCS region. It further considers the SCS as its integral and indisputable part of mainland China. Therefore, China has repeatedly been condemning the US offensive military posturing in the region. Since both countries are key international players, for the broader international security architecture to remain stable it has become the responsibility of both the countries to avoid any conflict in the SCS. Only this could normalize the situation in the SCS region and ultimately bring stability, peace in the region.

https://www.eurasiareview.com/30092020-importance-of-south-china-sea-for-us-and-china-and-their-growing-tensions-oped/

India's Test of Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle and Implications for South Asia

Ahyousha Khan

In September this year, India claimed to have successfully tested scramjet engine technology. This has been indigenously developed for its hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV). As per the Indian estimates, this particular and sophisticated technology would be a key component for the development of the next generation of hypersonic cruise missiles. After attaining supersonic technology and developing supersonic cruise missiles with the help of Russia, India now also aspires to have hypersonic weapons in its inventory. India's pursuit of hypersonic cruise missiles would bring new security challenges for Pakistan. This would have devastating implications for the strategic equation of the region since it would further enable India to a resort of the first strike against Pakistan. Likewise, this would ultimately destabilize the already volatile South Asian region.

It would be pertinent to mention here that hypersonic weapons are of two types: hypersonic glide vehicles (glide towards the target before dropping) and hypersonic cruise missiles (use scramjet engines). Furthermore, the hypersonic missiles are not just deadly because of their incredible speed (sustained speed of more than Mach 5); even ballistic missiles could reach up to Mach 25 in their re-entry phase. The major difference is the maneuverability and terrain hugging capability of the hypersonic missiles, which allows them to have more unpredictable flight paths. Consequently, they can easily penetrate the advanced air defence systems that are currently available in the world and might even in the near future as well. Furthermore, hypersonic missiles can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. What makes them more lethal is their enhanced speed, with which even a conventional warhead hypersonic weapon can destroy unhardened or underground facilities. Moreover, because of their speed, range, precision, and lethality, they are also considered as ideal weapons against time-sensitive targets and missile defences. Therefore, it can be said that hypersonic weapons are effective counter-force weapons because of their precision and capability to target and destroy high-value targets with incredible speed and accuracy.

After the successful test of the scramjet engine meant for powering the HSTDV, India has been aiming to become part of the elite group of states that possess this technology. Previously the US, Russia, and China have been part of the arms race to develop hypersonic weapons. Last year in June, India failed to successfully test scram-jet technology. However, the recently claimed success of the September 7th test of HSTDV has been celebrated by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Prime Minister Modi, and the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh as a 'landmark achievement'. According to the Press Release by the

[Indian Ministry of Defence,](#) HSTDV was launched on top of a solid-fueled rocket; it carried to an altitude of 30 kilometers at the speed of Mach 5 for about 20 seconds. Though Indian media considers this test as India's entrance into the ["elite league"](#) of nations possessing hypersonic weapons, in reality, the test has been conducted at the speed of Mach 5 which is believed to be the lowest possible speed for hypersonic weapons. This reflects two things: firstly, India has improved its technology from the previous failure, and secondly, there is a long way ahead of India to develop and deploy hypersonic weapons. Moreover, this capability also reflects India's inclinations towards the development of counter-force and pre-emptive nuclear capabilities, which are contradicting its long doubted policy of 'no first use'. This situation has become more alarming since India has been acquiring advanced missile defense systems and also developing counter-force technologies like the hypersonic weapons simultaneously. This could result in a false sense of security and superiority within the Indian strategic elite. Inspired by this India could attempt to launch a first strike most probably against Pakistan.

Hence, the development and deployment of hypersonic weapons by India would likely eliminate the existing parity in South Asia primarily ensured by Pakistan's nuclear capability. Today, deterrence stability exists between both countries because both possess the capability to inflict the damage and it becomes unappealing for them to initiate a nuclear attack. However, if the Indian pursuit of hypersonic weapons goes on with its belligerent policies, the deterrence stability might not hold for long. Therefore to maintain parity and deterrence stability in South Asia, Pakistan might need to think of the probability of developing its supersonic and hypersonic weapons or at least come up with an alternative and a plausible way-out. Moreover, Pakistan needs to further ensure the adaptability of the mutually assured destruction in South Asia and eliminate the chances of the first strike by India. Since hypersonic weapons would reduce the response-time and blur the line between conventional and strategic weapons; Pakistan needs to further develop a mechanism to address this emergent threat to maintain the nuclear deterrence equilibrium in the region.

Summarizing it all, the emergence of hypersonic weapons in South Asia has posed a serious threat to regional security. It seems that India is quite eager to develop and ultimately deploy the hypersonic weapons. There is no doubt that at the moment South Asia is engulfed in an action-reaction spiral between India and Pakistan mainly triggered by Indian offensive strategies and threatening policies vis-à-vis Pakistan. Once becoming operational, India's hypersonic weapons would likely add up to this chain of action and reaction. This might ultimately compel Pakistan to revisit its existing nuclear posture vis-à-vis India.

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