



# VISION

VISIONARY INSIGHTS INTO THE STRATEGIC INQUESTS OF NATIONS

## SVI FORESIGHT

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 10  
OCTOBER 2017

Compiled & Edited by:  
S. Sadia Kazmi

**Strategic Vision Institute**  
**Islamabad**

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STRATEGIC VISION  
INSTITUTE

**Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)**

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## **Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)**

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

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

## **SVI Foresight**

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*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*

October 2017 has been yet another happening month at the local, regional and global level in terms of Pakistan's internal politics, regional policies and drastic shifts in the global political domain. These developments have had direct implications for Pakistan and for the South Asian region. Hence the October issue of the SVI Foresight presents an all inclusive round up of various strategic and security issues by providing an in-depth analysis of each. A very interesting take on cyber security can be found in this volume where the author has tried to evaluate Pakistan's cyber security within the realm of nuclear deterrence. One cannot deny the fact that the nuclear weapons are the legacy of 20th Century and cyber security is the challenge of 21st Century. With the growing digitalization and amalgamation of cyber space in defence and security, new threats to national, regional and global security are emerging every day. It is important for Pakistan to securitize its cyber space because otherwise communication system, working critical infrastructure, financial systems and conventional systems can all easily become targets. However, the author of the article maintains that the possibility of a cyber attack on strategic assets could be consequential in terms of the escalation of a cyber conflict into a war. Going to an all out war is the worst case scenario — what is more plausible is cyber skirmishes between India and Pakistan.

Another opinion article in this issue scrutinizes India's Cold Start doctrine and points to the volatile tendencies and inclinations of Indian military and civil leadership as have been displayed from time to time. The article specifically gives reference to the recent statement by the Indian Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa where he claimed that Indian pilots have the capability to locate and eliminate nuclear and other strategic targets in Pakistan. This proves that the 'cold start' mentality on part of Indian officials has persistently kept its momentum. The Indian military establishment, on several occasions, has highlighted its offensive intentions against Pakistan. In this article readers will find an interesting analysis of India's increasing obsession with its cold start doctrine.

Nuclearization of South Asia, deterrence and strategic stability is another significant area which can never become irrelevant as long as there are nuclear weapons in the region. Hence a very pertinent take on the deterrence stability and surgical strike has been provided in yet another article included in this issue. Ever since the nuclearization of South Asia, Pakistan is trying to mitigate the effects of Indian non-conventional military build-up to secure some level of nuclear equilibrium. In fact nuclearization and deterrence have helped India and Pakistan to avoid complete extinction of each other. However, objectively speaking, deterrence has virtually failed on lower levels of strategic stability. The absence of deterrence stability at more moderate levels has created adequate space for both rivals to contest each other. Surgical strike and its so-called use to counter terrorism is also Indian attempt to exploit the gap below the nuclear threshold. It is suggested by the author that the policy makers in Pakistan should immediately divert their attention to how can the manipulative behavior of India can be effectively countered.

Another important region that has managed to earn the global attention is the Korean peninsula owing to the bellicose disposition from both the US and Korean leadership. While the whole world is looking in anticipation for some way to normalize the situation, Washington's official position remains the same i.e. it will settle for nothing less than Pyongyang surrendering its entire nuclear weapons program. However it also points to the diplomatic failure on part of the US and the fact that the present leadership seems to have lost its tendency to learn from the past experience. The policy of aggression has clearly not worked — not even with Trump in the White House — and today North Korea boasts a missile capability that is said to be able to hit the US on its East Coast. In view of these realities, the stubbornness on part of the US might push its nemesis to the point whereby the threat of war that would kill millions upon millions could become a reality. The article in this issue suggests plausible means that could be adopted by the two sides to normalize the situation.

Other articles included in this issue cover significant issues such as Tillerson's recent visit to the three South Asian countries, SCO's aims and objectives, Army Chief's visit to Russia,

CPEC and Pakistan's maritime Security, nuclear politics in South Asia, rising street crimes in Pakistan, non-proliferation and power politics etc.

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

Senior Research Associate  
Syedah Sadia Kazmi



## *Non-proliferation Never Ran Smoothly*

*Ubaid Ahmed*

Amid World War II, none of the significant belligerents were sure that the progression of nuclear weapons was conceivable, yet all realized that different states were at that point or could soon be attempting to fabricate the bomb. This dread was the focal stimulus for the American, British, German, and Soviet weapons' programs. The United States created nuclear weapons not because it had greater demands for nuclear bomb but because the United States invested more heavily in the program.

Initially, a more fundamental inquiry must be tended to: Why do nations need atomic weapons in any case? All things considered, some need nukes for self-defence, but they're a generally shoddy method for deterring an attack. Some need them as cover for their own forceful plans; waving a couple of nukes can debilitate resistance. Some need them as a badge of prestige. Presumably most nuclear wannabes are propelled by some blend of all the above.

However, under this security model's rationale, the NPT is viewed as an organization allowing non-nuclear states to get the better of a collective action problem. Each state desires to be the only nuclear power in its region; the state will avoid further proliferation if its neighbours remain non-nuclear. But it is important to remember that in the world's current state of affairs, militants and insurgents are the most likely belligerents against a state. A nuclear deterrent is utterly ineffective against such groups; they have no cities that cannot be bombed, nor are they focused on self-preservation.

However with the advancements in globalization, the existing political order is experiencing expanding stress. Both global organizations and non-state actors are dissolving the conventional idea of national sovereignty and challenging states' monopoly of power in energy, politics, military and other lawful domains.

Undoubtedly, worldwide agreements or treaties like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are among the variables that have contracted countries' power.

It seems to be likely that elements like globalization, technological dispersion, territorial security contests and intensification in actions of non-state actors will increase the number of nuclear powers worldwide. The cost of building and keeping up these weapons could inhibit proliferation, but it is far more important for nuclear states to show genuine commitment to disarmament and set a precedent for the world.

Moreover we ought to develop a new approach to security which is capable of transcending borders, an inclusive approach that is centered on the value of every human life. The sooner we can make that transition, the sooner we will achieve our goal of living on a planet which is free of war. The global community has not been successful in creating a possible alternative to the doctrine of nuclear

deterrence as the basis for international security. Nuclear weapons will not go away until a reliable collective security framework exists to fill the void.

To conclude we must continue to develop and refine proposals for action to bring them to the attention of governments and opinion leaders, and to promote public discourse on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Most importantly, the world must remember that under current circumstances, one mishap or mistake can result in the death of millions.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/114111/non-proliferation-never-ran-smoothly/>

## *SCO Aims and Objectives*

### *Baber Ali Bhatti*

For the peace and harmony of Asia, China and Russia with their four central Asian Partners extended their arms and accepted India and Pakistan as the members of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It was the 17th SCO summit that marked the entry of two major countries. Both countries pledged to adhere to SCO Charter that calls for security cooperation and fight against terrorism and violent extremism, besides envisaging multiple spheres of cooperation. Primary goals of SCO's are: making joint efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region; strengthening neighbourliness among its member states and promoting cooperation in different areas including politics, trade, economy, culture, research, technology, tourism and environmental protection.

SCO was also aimed to check the western interventions in heartland of Asia and curb the rise of militancy of all kinds. Some western analyst tagged the establishment of SCO as a counter-balance set-up for NATO. This perception was vitalized owing to doable position of Russia and China that they would not allow United State to intervene in the bordering areas by any means. SCO is also labeled as China oriented SCO. All in all, SCO is viable and influential forum in the region. With the SCO, India may aspire to join a key international high-table where it can bring forth matters of its concern, such as terrorism and trade.

Economic development has been prioritized by India and SCO can pave the way to achieve the economic objectives in shorter time. Besides, it will also provide better access to the central Asian region which is still untapped when it comes to minerals and coals. On the other hand, Pakistan may try and make it another forum to improve its reputation. Moreover, Pakistan can secure various gains on this table with the better operationalisation of CPEC. There is much more to be achieved at this forum for all member states.

However, there are certain reservations and observations when it comes to draw the future picture of SCO with inclusion of Pakistan and especially India. China is continued to engine the economic ventures with the support of Russia and other member states. In case, economic linkages among member compounds, China will be primary beneficiary of that linkage. Beijing is already following the well calculated strategies for its economic growth especially with Belt and Road plans in which all member states are encompassed with the exception of India.

India recently went through border skirmish with China which further strained the relations. China beefed up the boots near border as pre-emptive measures whereas India made the major deployment for its preparedness. Furthermore, China's spokesperson also signaled that regional countries should not linger for alliances to strain the regional environment with reference to Indo-Japan relationship. Sino-Indian strained ties may lure India to employ hostile stuff against China regardless of the fact that China has utmost influence over SCO.

On the other hand, from the last few years, India is utilizing its influence and has activated its lobby in Washington to further undermine the fragile Pak-US ties by painting Pakistan as sheltering the militants. At a time, Indian planners are employing their moves discreetly to enshroud the on-going terror campaign with utmost cooperation of Afghan intelligence. India is likely to retain its maneuvering against Pakistan by instrumental use of SCO.

India must revisit its policies and should not use this forum to focus on the bilateral disputes. Previously, India twisted the small neighbours' arms shamelessly to torpedo the SAARC summit which was scheduled to be held in Pakistan in last year. India should not repeat such episodes for smaller gains. Instead SCO should be utilised for regional gains and mitigate the animosity. Lately included members have deeply rooted hostilities. China is also seen as hostile state by India. Therefore, it might be challenging for SCO to manage the affairs of such two-pronged hostile triangle. However, both India and Pakistan need to contemplate about their commitment to the objectives and goals of the SCO.

<https://pakobserver.net/sco-aims-objectives/>

## *Pakistan's Cyber Security in the Realm of Nuclear Deterrence*

*Ahyousha Khan*

It is to be said that nuclear weapons are legacy of 20th Century and cyber security is challenge of 21st Century. With the growing digitalization and amalgamation of cyber space in defence and security, new threats are coming into being.

Developing states like Pakistan are so engulfed in their traditional and conventional threats that emerging issues have failed to capture greater attention. But for how long can these issues with potential to be a threat can be ignored and can Pakistan afford this kind of ignorance where threats are increasing by leaps and bounds? Furthermore, threats and security concerns don't occur in a vacuum, rather they interact in presence of variables like national policies, and international or regional scenarios by interacting with other variables threats either resolved or become more complex. However, one thing is for sure and that is that the state cannot surpass these issues without solving them.

Cyber security is emerging as a new threat and states are yet in the process of making a framework to address this problem. But, as discussed above, cyber security risks are also emerging in the presence of a lot of other factors. One of these significant factors in the case of Pakistan is its nuclear capability and deterrence vis-à-vis India. India-Pakistan are practicing the arduous task of deterrence to reduce their security dilemmas. Deterrence has enabled both states to refrain from going in an all out war because of the unbearable costs. But, clearly it doesn't mean that all is peaceful between both states. Many conflicts are ongoing and border skirmishes are daily routines between the hostile nuclear neighbors of South Asia. An alarming fact in the case of India-Pakistan is the realization that though the nuclear threshold is not crossable, there are levels below it and they should be explored. One of the potential levels below nuclear threshold could be of cyber space.

With the recent news of banning of access to social media in public office due to the detection that India plans to launch cyber attacks signifies that India can explore this domain in future. Contributing factors facilitating an Indian attack on the cyber space of Pakistan could be the rapid militarization that is raising stakes to for an actual war.

Secondly, recent doctrinal development-joint forces doctrine, cold start doctrine – in India indicates desperation to develop counter measures against threats below the nuclear threshold. Indian joint force military doctrine declares cyber power “is the ability to use cyberspace freely and securely to gain an advantage over the adversary while denying the same to him. Under the light of this definition India's future ambition is to strengthen its offensive cyber capability to seek more and more of an advantage.

Lastly, the most significant factor that could enable India's exploitation of Pakistan's cyber security is a lack of security measures in cyber realm by Pakistan itself.

Cyber security is a hush-hush matter in Pakistan. Public debates never entail this diverse and complex problem as society is rapidly moving towards digitalization.

According to estimates almost 16 million people were using the internet in Pakistan at the end of year 2014-2015 and this number is increasing day by day. Mostly when it comes to securitization of issues, Pakistani policy makers appear to wait until some catastrophe unfolds and then develop solutions to the problem. But, if India is sharpening its tools in the cyber domain Pakistan cannot just sit around. Rather than waiting and developing counter strategies against India's ambitiousness why not think and prepare ourselves for future Indian plans, this way not only will our deterrence work at larger level, but at lower levels as well.

It is important for Pakistan to securitize its cyber space because otherwise communication system, working critical infrastructure, financial systems and conventional systems can become targets. However, the possibility of a cyber attack on strategic assets could be consequential in terms of the escalation of a cyber conflict into a war. Going to an all out war is the worst case scenario — what is more plausible is cyber skirmishes between India and Pakistan.

At present, due to lack of cyber securitization at societal level Pakistan's cyber security is penetrable. In cyber attacks most enemies try to steal critical information or disrupt national critical infrastructure to create havoc and panic. It is an ideal tool between two nuclear, heavily armed opponents as it provides anonymity to the attacker with an available option to decline any linkages to the attacker.

At the moment what the Pakistani government is trying to do with regard to the cyber space is its politicization, which will not serve national interests in face of India's emerging cyber capabilities. It is a matter of fact that the securitization of cyber space would not be easy due to claims of violations of human rights and democratic norms, but, there is no other option available to Pakistan.

Like many other technological innovations in realm of security, cyber security is also a grey area. States cannot afford to leave this grey area open for an enemy to exploit, disrupt or destruct just because a state as a physical entity is not damaged.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/12102017-pakistans-cyber-security-in-the-realm-of-nuclear-deterrence-oped/>

## *Reiteration of Cold Start Doctrine Time in Time out*

### *Beenish Altaf*

The 'cold start' mentality on part of Indian officials has kept its momentum persistent into its political sphere. The Indian military establishment, on several occasions, has highlighted their offensive military intentions against Pakistan. Recently, on the 85th anniversary of Indian Air Force on October 8, the international community came to hear another hawkish statement from the commander of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa. He claimed that Indian pilots have the capability to locate and eliminate nuclear and other strategic targets in Pakistan. He was speaking at the annual Air Force Day press conference on IAF response to Pakistan's store of tactical nuclear weapons.

On one hand, Indian Cold Start Doctrine provided the actual pathway to Pakistan to acquire short range missiles for ensuring its security and strategic stability in the region. On the other hand, IAF, Air Chief Marshal Dhanoa's said that IAF has the ability to locate, fix and strike and that is not only for tactical nuclear weapons but also for other targets across the border. Ironically this is not in response to Pakistan's battlefield nukes instead it a part of the confrontational confessions that Indian military sheer after every few days.

Looking back, in 2004, 'the Cold Start doctrine was envisaged and soon the word was out that relying on the mobilization of smaller, more compact formation of conventional forces in a series of attack, India will invade and bleed Pakistan with the help of IAF. That is exactly the air marshal was hinting at.'

Nevertheless, the Indian air chief is not the only one to hurl such warnings and publicly acknowledge the existence of Cold Start doctrine (CSD). Gen. Bipin Rawat, Indian army commander-in-chief, blazed a similar conflagration previously by acknowledging that the Cold Start doctrine exists for conventional military operations in an interview on January 4, 2017 in the strategic community of India right after few days of his appointment as army chief. He was the first senior Indian official, military or civilian, to do so as previous all the Indian chiefs avoided using the term Cold Start and preferred calling it as a 'proactive strategy'.

On the global front, India's constant aggressive moves one after the other, gives appalling signals to the international community that the south Asia region is in a state of permanent horrendous of regional conflicts. At the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, the outgoing US Vice President Joe Biden expressed his concerns in a speech over the rise of nuclear weapons in Europe, east and especially south Asia. This could be related with reference to this official acknowledgment of Indian Cold Start Doctrine also to the mobilization of Indian battle forces to border line. As a result, the response from Pakistani side would also be in the same way to ensure its incessant sovereignty. This is the only way to impede the efforts to malign Islamabad.

The Indian leaders are simply belligerent in their policies and statements without keeping the facts into mind. Though it is impossible to carry any of such attack but even on factual terms, Indians'

are bound not to hold such actions by the treaty back in 1988 between both South Asian nuclear rivals. It was a bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan on the non-nuclear aggression agreement, which is a bilateral and nuclear weapons control treaty between the two South Asian states, on the reduction (or limitation) of nuclear arms and pledged not to attack or assist foreign powers to attack on each other's nuclear installations and facilities. The treaty barred its signatories to carry out a surprise attack or to assist foreign power to attack on each other's nuclear installations and facilities. So, there is no question to notify the international community or anyone else know about what the IAF capabilities holds.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2017/10/15/reiteration-cold-start-doctrine-time-time/>



## *Surgical Strikes and Deterrence Stability in South Asia*

### *Ahyousha Khan*

In April 2017, India announced its Joint Military Force Doctrine to counter “full spectrum of military conflicts.” One of the significant developments in this doctrine is India’s infatuation with the “surgical strikes” as is evident by the usage of this term first time in September 2016. It was claimed that surgical strike strategy was opted to counter terrorism. Last year, India trumped the card that it has managed to launch a successful surgical strike near LoC and Pakistan denied that claim and declared it cross-border firing.

For quite long, India had no answer to the threat of terrorism but to rely on diplomatic maneuvering. However, the surgical strike was only fake capsule to manage the pressure of Indian people implying that their state is not sitting idly in response to so-called Pakistani sponsored terrorism.

The fact must be noted that surgical strike is military action involving air strike; it is required to be conducted with efficiency, precision and the element of surprise in it. This fact has been asserted by various national and international security personalities and scholars. On the other hand, Indian gave a slightly different definition of what it considered as a surgical strike; it is a military action done by forces with lightning speed to hit and destruct enemy’s installation and coming back to the same position.

By considering the option of the surgical strike as an effective response to terrorist activities India has created an option for itself in response to threats it is facing. Consideration of surgical strikes as a viable option, somehow, signifies the development of surgical strike as an answer to sub-conventional threats on the part of India. At the same time, this action has generated a debate that whether nuclear deterrence will be affected or it will remain the same.

Deterrence is something that halts enemy not to be ambitious for launching an attack and threats are delivered with a focus that such desires will not be met to end without heavy-costs. Since 1998, India and Pakistan are practicing an arduous task of deterrence and are constantly involved in an arms race to manage their security dilemmas.

Since nuclearization of South Asia, Pakistan is trying to mitigate the effects of Indian non-conventional military build-up to secure some nuclear equilibrium. It can be claimed to a certain extent that nuclearization and deterrence have helped India-Pakistan to avoid complete extinction of each other.

However, deterrence has virtually failed on lower levels of strategic stability. The absence of deterrence stability at more moderate levels has created adequate space for both rivals to contest each other. Surgical strike and its so-called use to counter terrorism is also Indian attempt to exploit the gap below the nuclear threshold.

Therefore, immediate concerns rise how manipulations in such a way can escalate the conflict.

Pakistan is a relatively smaller state than India. Its military budget is less than Indian military budget. India is likely to spend 2.94 trillion in contrast to Pakistan who will spend additional 10 percent of its existing budget of 920.2 billion. Indian conventional superiority is a perceived threat to Pakistan and Pakistan is relying on its deterrence capability of nuclear arsenals as a counter strategy to this threat.

Apparently considering a surgical strike as an option, India is challenging the effectiveness of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence. India is posing as a launch of nuclear weapons is a tough decision for Pakistan, and in this way, India may exploit the gap below the nuclear threshold. By doing so, India is also undermining the logic of rationality and fear that are guiding principles of deterrence discourse. Deterrence cannot work in an environment where nuclear rivals don't even consider the rationale behind holding on considering the consequences.

Even though what India declared as the surgical strike was nothing but a false claim, Pakistan is not at liberty to think that same kind of border skirmish will be declared as a surgical strike in future. With robust military and conventional capabilities, India might consider launching an attack. Furthermore, conflicts below nuclear threshold do have potential to escalate into nuclear conflict, In that case, will deterrence be effective? Or is it alright by India to keep exploiting levels below the nuclear threshold? As a countermeasure, it is necessary for Pakistan to strengthen its deterrence capability.

As now India has entailed this term in its official doctrine. Pakistan needs to take certain measures. First and foremostly, the conventional military build-up is the necessity of time, and conventional deterrence is unavoidable to tackle enemy like India. With recent developments in India and support of the International community for India would not help Pakistan to rely on nuclear deterrence. Indian access to MTCR is also a threat to deterrence stability. Owing to this fact, India will be able to access the technology like-cryogenic engines, predators' avenger's drones, arrow theatre missile defense interceptors so on that can also facilitate Indian dream of surgical strikes.

Secondly, Pakistan needs the procurement of fissile material to fulfill its growing domestic and military needs. Especially after the Indo-US deal, Indian fissile material resources are increasing. According to a report published by Harvard University "Indian Nuclear Exceptionalism," India can produce 2200 nuclear weapons. By having access to fissile material Pakistan would be able to maintain deterrence as we know it, otherwise, the disparity will change strategic equilibrium in South Asia. Thirdly, Pakistan needs to increase its surveillance capabilities, early warning capabilities and need to invest in UAV technology.

Lastly, to ensure deterrence it is necessary that state should not only develop credibility but develop a mechanism to communicate it as well. Therefore, surgical strikes have enough potential to pose future challenges for Pakistan in the given conventional and deterrence environment.

<http://southasiajournal.net/surgical-strikes-and-deterrence-stability-in-south-asia/>

## *Army Chief's Significant Visit to Russia*

### *Baber Ali Bhatti*

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa is expected to visit Russia within the week. As the army chief, it would be his first visit to Moscow. A Pakistan foreign office spokesperson has confirmed this visit and further mentioned that “Regular high-level exchanges between the two sides in the past few years have set the stage for translating political goodwill into a substantial partnership in particular, in the field of defence,”. This visit is expected to be fruitful in the defense arena as implied by the foreign office giving the field of defense as a focus of visit.

Former army Chief General Raheel Sharif also visited Moscow in the year 2015. The visit resulted in the first ever mutual military venture between Pakistan and Russia. Consequently, the first military exercise, Druzhba-216 (Friendship-2016), was held between Pakistan and Russia in 2016. This military drill lasted for two weeks, at a time when Indo-Pak tensions were particularly high. That military drill not only strengthened Pakistan-Russia military ties but also provided a conducive environment for trust building.

Similarly, before Raheel’s visit, former army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani also visited Russia. As a result of that visit, Russia and Pakistan signed a landmark defense agreement and Russia lifted an embargo on weapons exports to Pakistan. Such initiatives by Pakistan have cemented relations between the two countries, and may make Russia and Pakistan major regional allies in the future.

Bajwa’s visit is primarily aimed at reinforcing military relations and boosting defence relations via DRUZBA 2017, a two week long joint exercise between the Special Forces of Pakistan and the Russian military. The event has already been initiated in Russia and senior military officials from both countries observed the ceremony. However, the defense landscape has multiple avenues to be explored and worked on mutually. Therefore, this visit is expected to be focusing on other defense avenues along with joint military drills.

The striking point here is that Russia is quite concerned about the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. IS in Afghanistan has major consequences for Central Asia and Russian territories with Muslim populations. In this regard, the Pakistan military have had a fair amount of exposure and experience in counter-terrorism. The Pakistan Army’s experience in countering guerrilla warfare in Pakistan’s rough borderlands with Afghanistan has enough significance to be shared with other states. Therefore, a counter-terrorism alliance may also be one of the points of focus in this visit. It is also noteworthy that the Russian Deputy Chief of General Staff visited Waziristan a few months ago with his military delegation and observed Pakistan’s counter-terrorism efforts.

To counter the scourge of terrorism, efforts at regional level are imperative. The Pakistan army extensively operated in this manner in it’s counter terrorism efforts and can provide primary assistance and training to other countries in the region. Keeping in view this geographical status and Russian

counter-terrorism concerns, Pakistan may build a regional alliance which includes Russia to improve its international diplomatic standing. This is a significant possibility. After the Crimea episode between Ukraine and Russia, hostilities between Russia and the west are on the upswing. Trump's new South Asia policy has also tensed diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the USA. Ergo, Pakistan and Russia are quite suited for an alliance to counter the West's interests in the region. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can also provide a regional structure through which both countries can operate.

In the foreseeable future, Pakistan and Russia may find multiple grounds to carry joint ventures. The US has surpassed Russia as the largest arms exporter to India in the last few years. Interestingly, Pakistan is still an untapped market for Russian arms and military equipment. Russia can utilise Pakistan's markets for economic gains. In order to acquire Russian equipment, Pakistan usually passes through China which is not yet known for manufacturing heavy aircraft engines. By cutting out China as a middle man, Pakistan can gain huge economic benefits.

Keeping these points in view, this visit seems to be fairly significant especially when the US is rapidly changing its position. Such visits and exchange visits of military delegations can open-up various doors of regional cooperation between the two countries. Moreover, these visits have a role to play in rebuilding the bridges burnt between the two countries during the Cold War and the Russian War in Afghanistan.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/07-Oct-17/the-army-chiefs-significant-visit-to-russia>

## *Non-proliferation and Power Politics*

### *Qura tul Ain Hafeez*

The proliferation and usage of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (accompanying delivery means, together with ballistic missiles) are the most serious threats embraced by today's international security and global order. It is one of the ultimate challenges for the world's nuclear safety and security. The significant argument to cognise is the contemporary national security and threat paradigm (which has been changed now with respect to the cold war era). The conventional military and security proficiencies of a state have also been transformed in the forth-coming era. The nuclear non-proliferation regime has been failed to addresses the contemporary non-proliferation challenges.

The non-proliferation regime expects the nuclear weapon state not to transfer nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices to any recipient. However in the contemporary international political system there are various example of breaching these obligations. Another major challenge confronted by the non-proliferation treaties and regime is that they are now grounded on preferences of the prodigious powers. At the moment non-proliferation regime is a part of power politics. States like US use it for securing their own interest and safety. The Indo-US deal is the example of these penchants and preferences. The US government not only reformed her domestic law but special amendments were made in the guidelines of NSG for the sake of her love for India.

An exceptional relinquishment has been granted to India. This benefit's her to conduct nuclear deals not only with US but other countries as well. Countries like Australia and Japan have also inked various nuclear agreements with India. Another point of concern is that many of the India's nuclear reactors (almost 8) are not under the proper full scope safeguards of IAEA. There are reservations that; India is using her unsafeguarded nuclear reactors most probably for building the nuclear arms beside civil purposes. Subsequently alternation in the rules of the NSG challenges the legality of the non-proliferation regime with its discriminatory characteristics. States which are non-party to NPT other than India were not given the right to go for civil nuclear cooperation with other states. This shows the biased and prejudiced nature of non proliferation regime and a preference based approach instead of criteria based.

Consequently due to such inequitable policies of the treaties and regime encourage the non nuclear weapon states like North Korea to break the rules i.e. withdraw from NPT. This is the reason that today North Korea is a gigantic threat to the NPT. She has conducted the nuclear test and declared herself a nation possessing hydrogen bomb. Following the pursuit of North Korea Iran is also going on to continue her nuclear advancements. After North Korea, now it's Iran who is working hard for the nuclear technology. Recently in a statement US's president Donald Trump said "we must put an end to Iran's continued aggression and nuclear ambitions. You will be hearing about Iran very shortly." even after the economic sanctions, harsh statement from the US, and opposition from disarmament community Iran isn't stopping her quest for nuclear technology.

All these quests of states for the nuclear power enact serious threat to the non-proliferation. This is concrete clear but a bitter fact that non-proliferation efforts are unable to cure these threats. Although the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts are unable to achieve their objectives still award are been given to the Nuclear disarmament group. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) won the Nobel Peace Prize for their wonderful efforts in meeting up the challenges confronted by disarmaments. No matter if North Korea goes nuclear , no Matters if Iran continues her nuclear ambitions , no matter even if a country who is the super power alters the rules of an international non proliferation regime but sill they deserve the awards. The matter of the fact is that following such efforts for the non-proliferation, there isn't any assurance that this certainty can be advocated in a world where non-state actors are more and more challenging the power of the state.

Although is not that much easy for them to develop such a sophisticated technology. Even the states after their hard work and research of years hardly get the nuclear power, but where there is a will there is a way. And the non-state actors are trying hard to get access for nuclear bombs. There isn't need to give advices to these regimes working for the non-proliferations, because they know the best of their knowledge how to compete these challenges. The only need is the loyalty and to enhance the legality of their framework, which only comes if the maker and breaker of these treaties and regime persuade their work in good faith. Complete disarmament is a sweet joke of idealistic paradigm, it can't actually happen. But efforts can be made to stop further escalating this chain reaction of states going nuclear. This can be only done if States parties are to be given preferences on non-discriminatory and criteria basis. Acquiring the civil nuclear technology is the right of other states as well except the beloved of United States (India). If the game is fair the victory will be more farer.

<https://pakobserver.net/non-proliferation-power-politics/>

## *Rising Street Crimes*

### *Naila Farooq*

Recently, when I became the victim of a street crime in Lahore's Mughal Pura area, a lot of issues regarding the state of law enforcement, attitude towards women in our society and misguided government spending became readily apparent. Mughal Pura is one of Lahore's busiest shopping centres and comes under the jurisdiction of 'Thana Mughal Pura', one of the important police stations in Lahore. The moment I stepped out from my car a person in his early 40s rushed his bike to me and tried to snatch my purse. When I resisted he just tore the gold chain I was wearing from my neck and rode off. My next action was to call 15. The rescue team took about fifteen minutes to reach the scene of the crime, concluded the inquiry process and suggested that I submit an FIR. There are certain points in this incident that seriously require attention from the government, law makers and society.

The Punjab Government has spent millions of rupees to modify and upgrade law enforcement agencies. This includes initiatives like the formation of the Dolphin force and changing the uniform of the Punjab police. However, the rising rates of street crimes in Lahore have marked serious questions on the credibility of the Lahore Police. There are hundreds of officers employed in the 15 emergency number and they are charged with taking quick action regarding crime or accidents. The thing is instead of new cars, bikes and uniforms these officers have no proper electronic devices or manual system to file FIR's on the spot. They write details by hand on a plain notebook and if one has to submit an FIR he or she has to visit the police station.

Second, the way the offender came and rushed back into the streets after accosting me means he was a career criminal with sufficient knowledge of escape routes and exit points. Meanwhile the time he took showed that he was well trained and aware of locations where he could sell stolen items.

Third, the behaviour of people towards a victim of a crime was very disappointing. Following the initial formalities, I asked the men of my family to file an FIR at the police station as per societal rules. Their response was, "don't bother, nothing will come of it, the police is useless." Meanwhile, some remarks were made such as "how did the thief see your chain if you were wearing a duppata", or "You were not wearing duppata! That's why he snatched your chain; this is what happens to disobedient Muslim girls", "What you were doing in a marketplace without your Mehram". Now the question is, if the 'Duppata' is a symbol of your financial as well as physical security than there is no need for police and all females even the males that have been robbed or became victims of street crime need to wear a huge chadder or veil.

This is one of the prominent reasons for an increase in crime rate. This was a case of petty crime and the men in my family did not allow me to submit an FIR to protect the 'honour' of the family. What happens then, in cases of sexual harassment or rape? That is why sex offenders are getting more confident. Because they know that no one is going to file a report against them. Meanwhile society and the police force focus on shaming the victims of sex offenses.

Therefore the government has to take serious steps to combat street crimes. First they should introduce the means to submit an application online if the victim can't visit police station. They should also spend money on upgrading police efficiency instead of changing their uniforms and 15 should be provided with online facilities to file FIR's on the spot and the system should be connected between all law enforcement agencies.

Next, police agencies have to make serious attempts to build confidence in the public so that people should report crimes instead of assuming that nothing will come of filing FIR's. Police officers who are serious about their jobs should be respected and trusted.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/127239/rising-street-crimes/>



## *Indo-US Stance on CPEC: A Critical Appraisal*

*Asia Maqsood*

Development does not depend upon the “disputed areas” rather on the economic cooperation where China Pakistan and India can cooperate with each other in South Asia on CPEC which would pave the ways for the resolution of Kashmir issue. In this context, US Defense Chief Jim Mattis’ recent statement shows the strong Indo-US nexus in which both pursues their strategic objectives; US wants to contain China in South Asia and tries to intimidate Pakistan to stay inside of the US orbit of influence and India wants to Contain China in this region.

Since the beginning of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC), India is quite open in opposing this mega Project and now the US has also shown its weight behind India by saying that it too believes the route of corridor passes through a disputed territory — a reference to Northern areas of Pakistan. The statement has come at a time when Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif was in Washington and held series of talks with the US officials to normalize the tense relations.

This new stance has started another debate and is undoubtedly going to further damage the bilateral ties, as it is profusely obvious now that US envision a greater role for India in the region. Pakistan and China are working on the economic cooperative initiative is backed by the UN and several other countries of the world adding it is not directed against any third party.

The Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan makes the two countries traditionally alert against any possibility of large scale foreign investment coming into the region instead of any alleged political intent behind the foreign investment. India should focus on its negotiations with Pakistan to resolve this as a solution to concern on CPEC. It is pertinent to discuss here that the northern part of India bordering Pakistan and Indian Held Kashmir both lack basic infrastructure.

CPEC is not a zero-sum game where on one hand Pakistan gains and India loses. As if the China-Pakistan’s economic cooperation make better infrastructure in the region including Kashmir territory, still India has the opportunity to expand trade routes to Central Asia. US Secretary of Defence James Mattis controversially waded into the CPEC debate by claiming that the “One Belt , One Road also passes through disputed territory an obvious reference to CPEC route through Gilgit Baltistan. The development cannot be prohibited in the disputed territories. CPEC is part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and t is inclusive strategy, hence India needs to be optimistic for the speedy development of the region by putting aside the political mindset and welcome the economic development of this region. There is also apprehension that India would start a military confrontation over CPEC. But that greatly depends on how many countries stand to benefit from CPEC. At the moment, the probability that India would be so reckless is very low.

The strategic implication of the construction of Gwadar Port under CPEC is meant to be monitoring the Indo-US naval activities on Indian Ocean. US have this concern and aspire to contain China's access on Indian Ocean.

From Pakistan's perspective, the Chinese seek to accelerate their trade and commerce through CPEC, which is an essential component of Maritime Silk Road enterprise composed of networks of railways, highways and pipelines along with various energy and industrial project subjected to stave off the energy starvation of Pakistan and regional connectivity and pave the way for China's access to Indian Ocean by linking Xinjiang province with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. The geo-strategic interests of both countries China and Pakistan converge beyond the geography and also include a substantial role in Afghanistan. As far as China's interests in Afghanistan are concerned ranges from the development assistance, investment enterprises and emerging security role to get and preserve its strategic objectives in the country which need enhanced security environment.

One major factor behind India's perceived sense of insecurity related to CPEC can be traced to the mega project's potential for uplifting the masses living in Pakistan's side of Kashmir from the evils of poverty and illiteracy, this is unacceptable to India as this hopeful situation presents a Pakistan's GB stark contrast to the situation in Indian occupied Kashmir, where the occupation forces have unleashed a reign of terror against innocent Kashmiris for committing the 'sin' of demanding legitimate socio-political rights.

As far as the world's disputed areas are concerned, there are such examples where the developmental work has been done such as last year Philippines released photographs of construction of structures by Chinese vessels in disputed Scarborough Shoal in South China Sea during ASEAN Summit in Vientiane. India beefed up its concerns against Chinese sponsored China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Will the disputes between or among countries obstruct the overall development of the region and the populace residing in those areas? China would not give up CPEC just because of mere Indian protests.

The Indian government will not cease its developmental activities in Arunachal Pradesh either. But is it not important to respect the voices of communities residing in disputed territories as a priority rather than following the institutional norms in developmental activities? From inter-governmental institutions like ADB/World Bank to each country sharing disputed territories like India or China or Pakistan, it is foremost important to stand up with rights to development of communities. Otherwise, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be considered 'universal'.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/19102017-indo-us-stance-on-cpec-a-critical-appraisal-oped/>

## *Korean Peninsula: Quest for Normalization*

*Ubaid Ahmed*

The bellicose rhetoric flying back and forth between the US and North Korea increases the perception of both sides readying to come good on respective threats thereby reinforcing (skewed) notions of the power of deterrence. Each is trying to build up specific arsenals to meet security concerns that may or may not be legitimate. Nevertheless, there is no getting away from the fact that cherry-picking certain polices represents an overt attempt — to quote Henry Kissinger — to “translate power into policy”.

Washington’s official position remains the same. Meaning that it will settle for nothing less than Pyongyang surrendering its entire nuclear weapons programme. This has clearly not worked — not even with Trump in the White House — and today North Korea boasts a missile capability that is said to able to hit the US on its East Coast. Yet Washington has seemingly yet to cotton on to the fact that it is too late to demand that the North Korean regime give up all its nukes. And it is this stubbornness that risks seeing the US push its nemesis to the point whereby the threat of war that would kill millions upon millions could become a reality.

The Trump administration must recognise the very real need for a tangible policy shift. It may be time to turn to history for some clues about the way forward namely, the post-Cold War strategy of ‘containment’. This would aim to minimise the North Korean nuclear programme and also dilute the power of a totalitarian regime that rallies a united population against a warmongering enemy. It is worth remembering, however, that it was fear of American aggression that first prompted Pyongyang to go nuclear. Thus have its security policies long revolved round the threat of war with the US. Additionally, it sees its nukes as a legitimate safeguard against American attempts at regime change.

Today, we must ask: can the international community, particularly Washington, live with a nuclear North Korea?

Three countries in the world have never signed the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Yet their nuclear capability is seen as a threat only as far as the regional context goes. Unlike Israel, India and Pakistan, however, the North Korea question remains somewhat different. Meaning that the latter’s ambitions extends far beyond deterring regional rivals. In short, Pyongyang is seeking capability to directly strike the American homeland. Moreover, it doesn’t have democracy on its side, especially after successive US moves have seen it isolated from existing multilateral systems. This leaves only one workable option on the table: both sides co-existing as nuclear rivals. After all, there is no concrete evidence to show that Pyongyang actually wants to hit the US first. Despite it being a hyper-repressive regime at home — it knows that would be tantamount to committing nuclear suicide.

Indeed, the Pyongyang paradox is this: despite rogue ballistic missile and ICBM tests, combined with pugnacious verbal threats directed towards Washington, leading to increased pressure not seen since the Korean War — North Korea strongly feels that it is the US that can’t be trusted. In fact, Kim Jong-un has firmly taken on board the international lessons learned from the American manoeuvres that

saw both Saddam Hussein (2003) and Col Gaddafi (2011) toppled by superpower might. Be that as it may, North Korea must remain mindful that the escalation of aggressive rhetoric may well heighten the prospect of catastrophic miscalculation.

China in this regard may represent potential leverage against Pyongyang, though the extent of this can't be overestimated. Nevertheless, it is in Beijing's interest to hold both sides back from war. For if the worst were to happen, the Chinese would find it difficult to manage the cost of the fallout of North Korean regime change in terms of the inevitable surge of refugees scrambling across the border.

Then there is also the likelihood, if Pyongyang fails to dial down its belligerent rhetoric, of a critical rearmament of the Korean Peninsula. However, if this were to happen, the US would need to extend its nuclear umbrella over its Asian allies in a similar fashion to how it brought its European allies within the NATO fold. Conversely, all of this might well make the North Koreans feel under even more threat. Thus the diplomatic solution has to be put back on the table and soon. In short, the Pyongyang regime is not as crazy as the western media would have the world believe. Hence a peace deal, including a focus on economic development as well as a US commitment not to seek regime change represents potential currency for diplomatic exchange in the future.

To sum up, therefore, diplomacy, coercion, sanctions and deterrence all have an unequivocal part to play in the Korean Peninsula. Yet the question remains as to whether the Kim Jong-un regime is prepared to genuinely enter into negotiations. And the only way to find that out is for the US to offer it tangible gains.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/127189/korean-peninsula-quest-normalisation/>

## ***Nuclear Politics in South Asia***

*Asma Khalid*

The strategic framework in South Asia is comprised of a bipolar equation between India and Pakistan, inter-connected with a regional security complex and other major powers. In South Asia, it is believed that peace and stability can only come about with nuclear weapons.

Nuclear arsenal is characterised as a great equaliser and the ultimate tool to counter the adversary's present or future conventional strength. Pakistan's strategists identify conventional military imbalance to that of India's and believe nuclear weapons are a safe alternative to avoid a dangerous conventional arms race. India should realise that by developing nuclear weapons and compelling Pakistan to follow suit, it has neutralised its conventional advantage.

Moreover, nuclear weapons have played a significant role to revolutionise the relations amongst major powers and South Asian states. The positive trajectory of Indo-US nexus, and Trump's 'do more' rhetoric for Pakistan has made South Asia's strategic environment more complex and unpredictable. South Asian politics are going through profound changes since the announcement of a new US strategy regarding Afghanistan.

The role of South Asia in the strategic calculations of the US cannot be ignored due to its continued interests in West and Central Asia. Pakistan-US relations have been in a critical position since President Donald Trump criticised Pakistan foreign policy in August this year. Trump's harsh rhetoric shows that the Indo-US nexus is getting deeper in contemporary regional politics. Two factors are playing a compelling role to bring the US and India close, firstly the economic rise of China and the development of CPEC.

Secondly, Afghanistan is the main bone of contention in Pakistan-US relations. The US believes that the growing economic role of China and Russia's resurgence in Afghanistan will affect the political influence and strategic interests of the US in the region. These factors are playing a key role in maintaining strong strategic ties between India and the US.

Trump's inclination towards India is due to its' policy of containment of China and strategic interests in Asia is attracting greater attention on New Delhi. For this purpose, the US is vigorously assisting India in modernising and enlarging its nuclear forces. Recent trends reveal that India is pursuing a long-term programme for conventional and nuclear force modernisation to achieve strategic objectives.

These objectives are manifested through the development of advanced technology and forced multiplier conventional weapon systems as well as improvement in ballistic missile and anti-ballistic missile system. India has many operational missiles in its inventory. India's expanding nuclear capabilities with the significant improvement in range, accuracy, payload and reliability, is not only

forcing the regional states to enhance their capabilities to ensure their security, but also to have the potential to impact the nuclear geometry of South Asia.

New challenges to security and peace are rising in the region. In a crisis, to maintain peace and stability in region, Pakistan is required to continue qualitative and quantitative improvements in its conventional and missile arsenals to offset the impact of India's proactive operations (CSD) and Ballistic Missile Defence system. Pakistan on its part has responded to these challenges by developing a short-range, low yield, battle field weapon named as "NASR" and surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Ababeel. These developments are capable to demonstrate the complete credibility of its nuclear deterrence posture. Significant contributions of 'Nasar' and 'Ababeel' in the defence arrangements of Pakistan are bargaining chips to negotiate stability and security in South Asia. Another striking issue is that non-proliferation regimes especially MTCR and NSG are subjected to manipulation by the US for its own interest contrary to the purposes for the creation of such regimes. Such as India's accession of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the US support to India's entry into nuclear cartels (NSG) while giving a false impression that it is neutral in this case, they have had the ability to pose deleterious effects on the India-Pakistan nuclear equation.

In the geo-strategic landscape of South Asia, Pakistan's strategic partnership with China will have a balancing impact on growing strategic ties between India and US. Encapsulated by the US-India civil Nuclear deal. The United States' commitments to facilitate India's entry into export control regimes and Security Council has complicated the regional security environment. At the same time, Pakistan's efforts to strengthen strategic partnerships with China and close ties with Russia will not be acceptable for president Trump. Pakistan should respond accordingly to these challenges by enhancing its nuclear capabilities as India is purchasing nuclear technology under the umbrella of Indo-US nuclear deal.

To conclude, the growing conventional and strategic force asymmetry between India and Pakistan, strong Indo-US nexus and India's persuasion of regional war hysteria are the factors driving the region towards instability. In the evolving regional security dynamic, Pakistan needs to take necessary measures to maintain a full spectrum deterrence capability to safeguard national security and deter foreign aggression. Major powers, particularly the United States should implement policies to conciliate India-Pakistan rather than instigating instability in the South Asian region.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/127238/nuclear-politics-south-asia/>

## *Return of the Russians*

### *Nisar Ahmed Khan*

The recent visit by the Saudi King to Russia was, indeed, an historic one. Not least because this was the first such trip by a Saudi monarch to Moscow since their bilateral relationship began back in 1926. Thus the move by King Salman portends imminent changes to the geo-political landscape of the Middle East, where Russia is already emerging as a regional player.

The King Salman-President Putin moot wasn't all talk — deals were inked. These covered space exploration, nuclear energy, oil and, most importantly, a \$3 billion-worth arms deal.

Under which, Riyadh would buy the following: the S-400 air-defence system; anti-tank Kornet-EM rocket systems; TOS-1A (multiple rocket-launcher) systems; AGS-30 automated grenade launchers; and good old-fashioned Kalashnikov AK-103 assault rifles. Not only that, but two of the world's largest oil manufacturers also reached consensus on coordinating production and supply in order to stabilise falling global prices.

This may help Saudi Arabia diversify its predominantly oil-based economy while providing Russia with crucial leverage over the US. The latter, of course, is itself a big player in terms of oil production, while also exerting considerable influence over other Gulf monarchies.

Nevertheless, as much as this was a landmark visit, it was also a surprising one. For the two sides have shared a troubled history, even though the erstwhile Soviet Union had been the first state to recognise the Kingdom of Hijaz and Najid (as Saudi Arabia was known until 1932).

Yet they soon found themselves on opposite sides on a whole host of regional and international issues, particularly during the Cold War years. Fast-forward to today and the same holds true in the Syrian conflict, with Riyadh supporting the rebels while Moscow backs the Assad regime. All of which lends even more significance to the royal trip to Russia. Meaning that if a long-time US ally can break bread, as it were, with one of its fiercest opponents — then something definitely is afoot. While certain nuances of this may be open to estimation — what we can be sure of is that Russia is rising over the Middle East.

This balance of power shift may be partly down to the American disengagement from the region, in relative terms, that was overseen by the Obama administration, not to mention its nuclear agreement with Iran. The latter, of course, was concluded much to the dismay of both the Saudis and the Israelis. And although the Trump presidency has been busying itself with much sabre rattling against Tehran — it has been visibly devoid of any concrete Middle East policy. As a result, we see the US further alienated in the region, with traditional American allies now openly, albeit it tentatively, flirting with the Russian Bear.

If Washington is serious about reversing this trend, it will have to stop dealing with the Middle East as if it were a single, homogenous entity. This means recognising it for what it is: a region deeply

divided along religious, ethnic, sectarian and political lines. The prevailing weakness of this American approach was very much on display over the summer when Qatar faced diplomatic isolation at the collective hands of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Doha, of course, happens to be home to the largest US overseas military base. Thus Washington's apparent inaction — for fear of disaffecting one at the real cost of the other — made it look weak and unreliable at best. At worst, it appeared a superpower useful to none.

This is something that Russia has capitalised on. In other words, instead of risking such policy confusions, it has simply adopted a more flexible approach. This has enabled Moscow to engage with all regional stakeholders without fearing any loss to its credibility. For instance, Putin was able to balance reassuring Israel over the latter's concerns of an Iranian presence on Syrian soil — given the Jewish state's fears of a cross-border missile attack — and allowing Tehran into the country.

Speaking of which, by succeeding in turning the tide against anti-Assad forces and establishing final de-escalation zones in Syria, Russia has proved both its military and diplomatic clout. It is little surprise, then, that King Salman was said to have been keen to discuss a final agreement on Damascus with Putin. And it is this realisation that Moscow can no longer be ignored that may make all the difference when it comes to bringing the warring factions to the Syrian negotiating table, thereby restoring a fragile peace and a return to the status quo.

Saudi Arabia, for its part, is being prudent as it seeks to secure its interests vis-à-vis Iran and other potential regional rivals by diversifying its alliances and reaching out to Russia. Riyadh feels threatened by the Tehran missile programme as well as its regional influence, as underscored by the reported Iranian military and financial support to the Houthi rebels in Yemen and the Assad regime in Syria. Given that Moscow enjoys warm ties with Iran, it may well play the role of mediator between the two sides, thereby bringing an end to at least one of the region's proxy wars.

For this to happen, Saudi Arabia would have to stop kowtowing to American dictates and instead strike a difficult regional balance between Washington and Moscow. In reciprocity, Russia will have to ensure that Iran avoids interfering within Riyadh's immediate sphere of influence. This is challenging but not impossible. Meaning that common ground may be found, especially considering how the region's states have long suffered at the hands of both long proxy wars and terrorism. In short, any sincere mediatory role played by a credible and reliable actor has more chance of success.

Thus the changing geo-political landscape of the Middle East, characterised by waning US hegemony and growing Russian influence, appears to be ushering in a new chapter not only in Saudi-Russian ties — but also in terms of the broader balance of power in the region as well as in the Persian Gulf.

Whereas the US had unleashed chaos in the Middle East under the false banners of human rights, democracy and terrorism, Moscow had presented itself as a stabilising force; an effective deterrent to a unilateralist, interventionist superpower. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that the real test for Russia is whether or not it will be able to maintain such a role in the long-term, keeping in mind the urgent need to balance some of the region's historical arch rivals.



Be that as it may, one thing is certain. While we may not be going back to the USSR — Russia is most definitely here to stay.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/128998/return-of-the-russians/>

## *Takeaway from Tillerson Visit*

*S. Sadia Kazmi*

The much awaited and hyped up visit of the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has on the one hand managed to gather huge attention and hope owing to the fact that it was a quick tour to the three important countries in this region, while on the other hand, at its culmination it seems to have not achieved the desired results. The visit was primarily made as part of the US President Donald Trump's South Asia policy, especially focusing on the issue of terrorism and efforts of peace in Afghanistan. While the cause had been noble, but the approach adopted, especially the statements issued during, before and after the visit have largely proven to be counterproductive and multiplied the efforts, if any, by zero. Since the US has already embraced India as an anchor of stability in the region, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the pressure on Pakistan to show more concrete efforts against terrorism could have been part of the policy to please India.

Once again, the US biases had been very obvious. Before his visit, the statement made by President Trump alleging Pakistan of harboring terrorism and providing safe haven to the terrorists, didn't sit well with Pakistan for the obvious reasons. Despite the fact that Pakistan had been fighting the US' war against terrorism, had been the front line ally in uprooting this menace, and in the process incurred the loss of 70,000 civil and military personnel, and loss of 100 billion US dollars, the US has been un-appreciative and illogical in accusing Pakistan of supporting and promoting terrorism. All the hopes tied with the visit to bring regional peace and stability and improving security situation in Afghanistan have fallen flat. One of the probable reasons as to why the Secretary of the State was given a lukewarm welcome could have been these statements. Although later on he did meet all the high level civil and military leadership in Pakistan. While the facts show and support Pakistan's stance on its dedicated and honest efforts against terrorism, the US is persistent on pressurizing Pakistan to 'do more'. This clearly indicates that the US is just not willing to consider the objective reality and wants to illogically continue to harp the threatening tone. This also points to the fact that there is a huge gap between the US and Pakistan that has allowed misunderstanding and distrust to flourish. While both cannot afford it to grow any further but this realization is unfortunately lacking or has intentionally been ignored in view of the US vested interests i.e. threatening Pakistan in solidarity with India.

Tillerson also managed to give contradictory statements leaving the Pakistani leadership and decision makers confused. While he emphasized that Pakistan remains to be the most important country for the US in the region and talked at length about its regional importance, surprisingly in the same breath he stated that the US will eradicate terrorism with or without Pakistan. Although he supported his argument under a guise of "looking at the conditions on the ground", he seems to have overlooked the factual picture. The objective on-ground fact is that Afghanistan has been sufficiently infiltrated by the IS, since 45 percent of the country is not under the control of Afghan government. This is where the need for the real action against terrorism needs to be carried out, instead of on Pakistan's soil. Another real fact is that despite the 16 years long engagement in Afghanistan, the US has not been able to bring peace in the country. It needs to understand that it cannot be achieved without Pakistan's

help and that Pakistan itself is the biggest stakeholder in this whole scenario. The terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan have direct implications for the peace and stability inside Pakistan. Hence more than any other country, Pakistan is willing to and has been working against terrorism.

Hence, instead of adopting a tough approach against Pakistan, the US needs to truly look at the ground realities. If the US is genuinely interested in having peace in Afghanistan it needs to carry out anti-terrorism operation inside Afghanistan in which it will find full logistical and military support by Pakistan. For both Pakistan and the US there is much need to work on the mutual trust building and especially for the US to take into account the selfless sacrifices that Pakistan had made every time when the US required. A little acknowledgment and appreciation could actually go a long way.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2017/10/29/takeaway-tillerson-visit/>

## *CPEC Project: Meeting the Deadline or Not?*

*S. Sadia Kazmi*

Time and again it has been reiterated by the leadership of both the countries China and Pakistan that the projects under the CPEC are going to be completed within the stipulated time. However, every now and then some news surfaces challenging these claims. Sometimes it is the revision in the initial list of suggested projects or the shelving of some ongoing one. Nonetheless, before forming a firm opinion about the success or failure of this project, it is important to look at the real facts and figures and base one's judgment only on the official and credible information available. Besides it is too early yet and premature to predict the fate based only on assumptions. No doubt that CPEC, ever since its initiation, has been embroiled in controversies. There have been continuous attempts by the outsiders to sabotage the progress on the CPEC especially through negative propaganda, raising doubts and ambiguities about this multi-billion-dollar project. Simultaneously there has been repeated commitment and reassurances from Chinese as well as Pakistani side to make it a success. So far, the data on the official sites shows that there has been a smooth and consistent progress on the project hence confirming the government claims. The timeline of CPEC project completion has been divided into different phases under the early harvest scheme, medium term and the long-term scheme. Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Mr. Ahsan Iqbal mentioned in one of his press conferences, that the first phase of the project will be completed by 2017-2018, second by 2020 and the third by 2030.

The basic reason for dividing the whole project into phases is that it is basically a long term broad framework with multiple sectoral projects, which will be accomplished through bilateral agreements between both the sides over the period of time. It was reported in the month of May that both China and Pakistan have agreed to revise and update the list of CPEC energy cooperation projects, removing five pending projects with the combined capacity of 3470 megawatt. These include Muzaffargarh Coal Power project (1,320 MW), Salt Range Mine Mouth Power project (300 MW), Gaddani Power par (1,320 MW), Sunnec Wind Farm (50 MW), and Chichonki Malliyan Combined-cycle Power plant (525 MW). However, it has been affirmed that the removal of these five projects is mainly because of them being technically unfeasible. At the same time, it was reassured that with the removal of these energy projects the CPEC installed capacity agreed under the previous energy agreement will remain unchanged. In fact, new projects are planned to be added to the portfolio. Most of these new projects will be based on Hydroelectric generation. It was also decided that no change will be made in installed capacity of 17,045 MW and the allocated funds of \$ 34 billion. In the same context, China and Pakistan both agreed in the last JCC meeting to include hydro power projects in the northern Indus region under the umbrella of the CPEC.

The question as to whether the CPEC projects is going to be completed within the given time frame, can be well answered by looking at the progress on different projects. The official site shows the following statistics: Saihwal Coal-fired Power plant is completed (1,320 MW), Dawood Wind farm is completed (50 MW), Quaid-i-Azam Solar park is 90 percent complete so is Jhmipir Wind farm, Port Qasim Coal-fired plant, Karot Hydro power project and Wind Farm Phase II are 70 percent complete,

Suki Kinari Hydro power project is 65 percent complete, and Engro Thal Coal-fired power plant and Surfice Mine and Sachal Wind farm are 60 percent complete, Coal block Mine Mouth power plant and Hubco Coal Power plant are also 50 percent complete, and there are so many more that have already been initiated and are undergoing a steady progress.

Other than the energy projects, substantial progress has also been made on the infrastructural projects under CPEC. These include laying out of new routes for the facilitation of transit, trade and enhancement for market facility. In this regard, the upgradation of ML1 and Havelian dry port feasibility report has been completed and framework agreement has been signed. The construction work on Havelian-Thakot section of KKH Phase I is almost 70 percent complete, Karachi-Lahore Motorway i.e. Multan-Sukkur section is also 70 percent complete, Upgradation of ML1 i.e. Multan-Lahore section, Hyderabad-Multan section, and Kemari-Hyderabad section is 40 percent complete.

Similarly, a number of projects dedicated for Gwadar port city are also underway including China-Pakistan Faqeer primary school which is complete. Gwadar Free Zone is 60 percent complete, while Gwadar Eastway Express way and Gwadar New International Airport are 40 percent complete. Work on vocational college and Hospital is also underway.

Industrial and economic cooperation has also been given due consideration under the CPEC project where various regions of Pakistan have been engaged into industrial cooperation through resource mobility, economic integration and information connectivity. Work on Lahore Orange Line metro is 70 percent complete. Optical fiber cable from Rawalpindi to Khunjerab is 60 percent complete, while Gwadar-Nawabshah LNG terminal and pipeline is 40 percent complete.

All these facts and figures provide a clear picture about the progress on various projects under CPEC. Looking at the steady progress on the early harvest projects and firm commitment by the leadership of both countries, one can hope and believe that the CPEC is not only bound to be complete but will be completed in the selected time frame and will not only usher in a new era of socio-economic development in other parts of the provinces, but will also help promote tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan and bring prosperity in the region.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2017/10/29/cpec-project-meeting-deadline-not/>

## ***India's Increased Defence Expenditure, Current Trends of Human Security and Regional Stability***

***Asma Khalid***

States increase their military expenditures in an attempt to keep military dominance, to maintain a balance of power or a military force sufficient to act as a deterrent against an adversary so that they can secure their National Interest. This military buildup results in an arms race. Same is the case in South Asia: Arms race between India and Pakistan including conventional, nuclear weapons and missile have severe implications on South Asian security environment and poses a serious threat to the stability of the region.

There is an asymmetry between India and Pakistan in conventional military capabilities. India is trying hard to achieve primacy in every kind of military technology. It is constantly working to enhance its conventional and nuclear capabilities both qualitatively and quantitatively which is fueling the arms race between India and Pakistan and also enhancing the strategic instability and security dilemma between both states. In conventional weaponry India is far ahead of Pakistan and it is constantly engaged in improving it massively to promote its agenda of acquiring the super power status. India's military modernization and its agenda of becoming super power have created a serious situation because Pakistan wants to maintain a rough parity for survival. This fragile situation makes it necessary for Pakistan to review its position and take action consistent with its supreme national interest.

With the changing dynamics of security, now it is imperative that New Delhi and Islamabad should shift their focus from Traditional security to Human security. Because arms race has forever changed the security environment of entire South Asia as well as pose a serious threat to human security. High military expenditures are resulting in fewer budgets for social development. This can result in Economic and social threats including poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation. These threats are leading the society to internal conflicts in both states.

It is widely recognized that national security cannot be achieved in a situation where people starve but arms accumulate; where social expenditure falls and military expenditure rises. After the end of cold war the focus changed from military security to human security in most of the countries in western world but third world states could not follow the suit. Military security is the primary focus for policy makers in these states and these states are still lagging behind the developed world. For instance between India and Pakistan one main reason of hostility is their deep rooted distrust in each other which prevent them to cooperate. The result is huge military budgets which further burdened both countries' economies. But the fact is that after attaining a de facto nuclear powers status both states maintained credible deterrence against each other. Now their focus should be on human development because in present day world most of the conflicts are arising from within states as after the end of cold war world witnessed a total one hundred and ten violent conflicts out of which only seven were state to state.

Both India and Pakistan are facing internal security issues because of deprivations and social injustice. Large armies and nuclear weapons cannot guarantee human security. Human security can only be guaranteed by addressing the root causes of conflicts. To avoid internal conflicts and civil wars India and Pakistan should review their security policies and shift their focus towards Human security. Normalization in relations is required and for this a dialogue process is needed. steps like Confidence building measures can build trust between the two states, reduction of propaganda against each other in the media, Simplification of Visa system, Military leadership interaction to discuss military issues like nuclear and missile deployment, avoidance of arms race, enhancement of the role of SAARC, Encourage mutual beneficial trade and creation of an institution such as a Human Security Council, to consider the nature of regional human security crises and make prompt decisions to resolve them are essential in this regard.

India and Pakistan's bilateral relations generate a classic military security dilemma involving the spread of military technologies, arms racing and the interplay of national policies for defense and deterrence. All these possibilities create a highly unstable situation for Human development projects. So, it is urgent need of bilateral arms control regime to maintain the stability and peace. The obstacles on the road to arms control regimes can be smooth through different measures including shifting focus from traditional security to human security and by enhancing the role of international community and regional organizations between both states.

Therefore, Pakistan tries to fill the defence production gap through maintaining its credible nuclear deterrence. Additionally, many factors have compelled Pakistan to dependence on conventional and nuclear weapon to maintain its National security. Therefore, India's increasing defence spending while ignoring the Human Security has been viewed as a factor of instability in region and force Pakistan to increase its nuclear and conventional capabilities.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2017/10/30/indias-increased-defence-expenditure-current-trends-human-security-regional-stability/>

## *Rigidity on Part of Korean Issue Would Lead to Disastrous Consequences*

*Beenish Altaf*

The rigid stance of both North Korea and of the US has raised concerns over the nuclear hangover in between both states. North Korea is not ready to give up its nuclear weapons at this point in time especially when it has tested all the required nukes to create its deterrence effect also when it had detonated the hydrogen bomb test. The United States and North Korea are undoubtedly edging into increasingly dangerous territory but there is still a way to avoid war. And this could be done only if it begins with talks between the two sides, instead of escalating the threats.

On the other hand, South Korea is pushing the U.S. to allow it to take control of its own military forces should war break out on the Korean Peninsula, but the Americans are concerned that Seoul is not ready yet.

As North Korea is aspirant of detonating more and more nuclear weapons test, the US as a consequent, warned the North Korea in very open words; all options are on the table which includes military strikes on North Korea to curb its nuclear aspirations. Despite of the US military movements and its outrageous war intimidation the North Korean foreign Minister Han Song-ryol stated: "Now that we possess mighty nuclear power to protect ourselves from US nuclear threat, we will respond without the slightest hesitation to full-out war with full-out war and to nuclear war with our style of nuclear strike, and we will emerge victor in the final battle with the United States."

However, two top U.S. national security officials sought to tamp down fears of imminent nuclear war with North Korea following days of heightened rhetoric by President Donald Trump, as America's top general prepares to meet with South Korea's leader. But the Director Mike Pompeo, Central Intelligence Agency and H.R., national security adviser declined the possibility of breaking out an actual war with North Korea. Nevertheless, McMaster while taking into account North Korea's near-term intentions after monitoring recent intercontinental missile tests and the country's improved ability to manufacture nuclear weapons said, "we are not closer to war than a week ago, but we are closer to war than we were a decade ago."

Also, the Trump's statements time-in and time-out make the analysts to expect the unexpected upshots, for instance, he recently said that military options against North Korea were "locked and loaded." Although ironically, the U.S. hasn't taken any public steps to prepare for hostilities, including evacuating Americans from Seoul, which is within range of North Korean artillery, or moving ships, aircraft or troops into position for an imminent response. The U.S. has stationed about 28,500 troops in South Korea.



Reports of the exercises come as the U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis recently stated that threats of a nuclear missile attack by the regime are accelerating. He said “North Korea has accelerated the threat that it poses to its neighbors and the world through its illegal and unnecessary missile and nuclear weapons programs,”

‘Following the Trump’s declaration to unleash “fire and fury” on North Korea, Kim’s regime threatened to fire four Hwasong-12 missiles over Japan into waters near Guam, home to U.S. military bases in the region. The U.S. and its allies warned Kim against such a move, and Japan deployed four Patriot missile interceptors into the western part of the country.’ Similarly, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said that a military option must remain on the table in dealing with North Korea’s nuclear program. He also viewed a speech in London that he don’t think anybody could conceivably want a military solution to this problem, and yet clearly... the possibility of some kind of military option... that possibility must at least theoretically be maintained on the table.

Analytically when both parties want to maintain a hostile relationship and a rigid stance in dealing with this critical issue, a peaceful solution to the matter would only be a dream. On one side North Korea considers its nuclear growth the only way of survival and claims that if they have not opted to go nuclear they could have seen the its future similar like that of Iraq Syria etc. but on the contrary, the US cannot see another nuclear power emerging on the globe, plus its threatening posture in the region is unacceptable to the allied states of the US. However, in order to open up the doors of nonviolent solution one must be on the single page of negotiations and compromises, in one or the other way.

<http://foreignpolicynews.org/2017/10/30/rigidity-part-korean-issue-lead-disastrous-consequences/>

## *CPEC and Pakistan's Maritime Security*

### *Asia Maqsood*

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has great potential to transform Pakistan into a trade hub, which would definitely evoke some sentiment in our enemies, particularly India, to halt it.

Indian analysts have long been focusing on two important political and military ideas. One is that whoever controls the Indian Ocean also controls Asia, and the second is that extra-regional powers should be kept out as they called this India's ocean because it lies in its backyard.

This strategic thinking is obviously challenging, especially for Pakistan and China. Pakistan's Navy has since implemented plans such as its Special Task Force-88. As maritime traffic through Gwadar Port is expected to increase exponentially, eventually the success of CPEC depends upon maritime security.

A multifaceted approach is needed to meet all the security challenges by beefing up the security of Gwadar Port, directing security guards, coastal exercises and increasing maritime domain awareness in the region by engaging law enforcement agencies.

In addition to the challenges posed by India's growing influence in the Indian Ocean, there are other challenges such as human trafficking and piracy. Therefore Pakistan's Navy is working on three main areas: Gwadar Port security, vessel security and the security of sea lanes. To get all these objectives and for the efficient working of CPEC, Pakistan is expected to develop its own maritime security doctrine.

Initially India was the only country overtly opposing CPEC, but recently the U.S. started backing India, noting that CPEC passes through a disputed area. This is a new challenge ahead of this mega project.

The deliberations behind this opposition are aimed at pursuing its own hegemonic aspirations in the whole region of South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Additionally, India perceives this development as threat to its competing interests in Central Asia as it reaches out to Afghanistan and Central Asia through the Chabahar Port, which provides India a channel for easy access to Iran and Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the U.S. is quite apprehensive of China's presence in the Indian Ocean. Through the development of Gwadar Port and their mutual cooperation, Pakistan and China will be able to monitor Indo-U.S. maritime activities in the Indian Ocean. Hence, to secure the sea lanes across the Indian Ocean, the Pakistan Navy has to acquire more patrol ships and fast interceptor crafts at any cost.

It is pertinent that maritime security is linked with economic development. Throughout history, maritime trade has remained economically vital because the majority of trade was done through the world's seas, and fisheries have been a significant industry. Global shipping and fisheries have developed

into multi-billion industries. The commercial aspect of this development brings in more revenue because of offshore resources and coastal tourism.

The development of Gwadar Port under the CPEC project will bring new hopes for economic and trade growth. Therefore to secure this project, Pakistan has taken many steps to enhance maritime governance with the cooperation of China.

During mid-February, Pakistan conducted multinational naval exercise in Karachi and the northern Arabian Sea. Military vessels, aircraft and special marine force teams from 37 countries joined the five-day exercise. Pakistan has suffered a lot during the War on Terror, and since then, it has faced many limitations in foreign aid. This CPEC-Gwadar Port joint venture not only raised Pakistan's image in the international community in the form of investments but also made it the center of debate on many international forums. A new architecture of economic development has been emerging.

Simultaneously it has many challenges, including rising radicalization, terrorism, ethno-nationalism and poverty. China's aspirations for the development of its regional neighbors through modern infrastructure and economic development can meet all of these challenges.

Finally, the issues of transnational crimes such as maritime terrorism, piracy, human trafficking and cyber-related crimes in and around the Indian Ocean would disrupt international commercial activities, which could lead to economic collapse adversely affecting Pakistan and other stakeholders. Therefore, countering these problems has become one of the priorities for Pakistan by strengthening its maritime security governance. It is vital, if we look at this through the prism of regionalism, a critical security studies approach and constructivism.

Strengthening maritime security governance remains significant for both onshore and offshore maritime activities. Onshore activities are related to the physical infrastructure of the port and its surroundings, and offshore relate to all activities in the waters. International legal frameworks under UNCLOS, international maritime organizations and world customs organizations would allow collective security measures to strengthen by implementing and enforcing relevant laws, regulations and procedures for security, safety and efficient response in times of crisis.

<http://www.valuwalk.com/2017/10/cpec-maritime-security-pakistan/>

# *Trump's Decertification of Iranian Nuclear Deal: A Coming Catastrophe*

*Nisar Ahmed Khan*

With the US President Donald Trump's decertification of Iran nuclear deal, the prospect of peace and stability in the Middle East appears to be a distant dream. Largely seen as dangerously irresponsible act,

Trump's policy decision has not only casted a dark shadow over peace and stability in Middle East but has also escalated the ongoing tensions and conflicts among various competing forces whose interests diverge more than they converge on the complex geopolitical landscape of Middle East.

The 2015 Iran nuclear deal or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a multilateral, international agreement negotiated between Iran and five permanent members of UN Security Council plus EU. The deal which lifted US-led international sanctions in return for crippling limitations imposed on Iran's capabilities to acquire nuclear weapons is now under serious strain since US president Donald Trump refused to recertify the deal on October 13, despite reluctantly doing so twice before.

Trump has taken this decision in complete defiance of international community and the remaining signatories of the deal. Also, the endorsement of Iranian unwavering compliance with the deal by International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEA) that intrusively inspects Iran's nuclear program has no effect on Trump. Even some key policy makers in his own administration namely Rex Tillerson, Sect. defence James Mattis voiced for staying in the deal as long as it is working but Trump seems adamant in his approach and seeks options to tighten the noose around Iran which he blames for promoting terrorism and destabilizing the region.

So let's try to understand what led Donald Trump to take such an infamous decision? What policy objectives does he want to achieve? What will be Iran's response? And finally how it affects regional security environment in the Middle East?

By now it should be clear that Trump decision has less to do with Iran's compliance with the deal per se and more so with Iran's regional activities. It seems that the decision is primarily aimed at restoring the waning credibility and supremacy of US in shaping the outcomes and pleasing Washington's allies like Israel and gulf countries including Saudi Arabia. These countries perceive Iran's growing presence in areas like Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen a blow to their strategic interests.

Moreover, now that the Middle East is heading towards a post Islamic State ( IS ) era after the near complete military defeat of IS, the US is now looking determined to secure its interests vis-a vis Iran and its regional ally Russia. When it comes to Iraq, Iran has an upper hand which is not acceptable to US and allies. Iraq's predominantly Shia government rebuffed a statement by US secretary of state Rex Tillerson in which he called on Iranian backed forces to go home. Most importantly, Iran's Missile

program and missile tests is a thorn on the side of US that he wants to contain. This combined with Iran's growing resurgence regionally has caused the mounting hostilities.

Since assuming power and even during the election campaign Trump expressed his displeasure with Iran nuclear deal describing it the "worst deal ever" and "an embarrassment to the US" that he will end.

However, at least for now Donald Trump has stopped short of entirely walking away from the deal and has opened the window for congress to come up with an improved version that should allay Donald Trump's primary concerns related to the "sun set clauses" of the deal and Iran's missile program. But the trouble is that Iran has already ruled out any possibility of renegotiating the deal and has rebuked Donald Trump for tinkering with international agreements protected by UN Security Council resolution.

Trump's predicament is further compounded by the fact that Washington's key European allies have also vowed to protect the deal and have instead suggested that issues outside of the scope of the deal should be dealt separately. EU considers the deal as an important foreign policy achievement that serves the purpose of non-proliferation while demonstrating diplomacy and negotiations as the most viable and cost effective methods of conflict resolution.

Bolstered by this international support in favour of the deal, Iran is very unlikely to step back from its ballistic missile program that it argues and rightly so is out of the deal's scope. This will inevitably lead the two states in to war with each other if a situation so arises.

The US has already imposed economic sanctions on various entities of Iran including its powerful paramilitary force IRGC thus making the situation precarious. In the worst case scenario, if Trump administration fails to come up with an agreeable revised version of the deal and Iran resists US pressures, the deal can find itself in a trash and economic sanctions lifted under the deal could be re-imposed thereby potentially leading Iran to pursue nuclear capability if it so desires.

This seems plausible given the fact that Russia and China and most probably EU will continue their economic relations with Iran. Thus, it can only be hoped that sense prevails and all stake holders once again reconsider their respective stances and try to overcome their differences through negotiations and diplomacy since Middle East cannot afford further deterioration. It's time to rehabilitate and reconstruct the region for wandering refugees to return home and live a peaceful life.

[http://moderndiplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=3148:trump-s-decertification-of-iran-nuclear-deal-a-coming-catastrophe&Itemid=139](http://moderndiplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=3148:trump-s-decertification-of-iran-nuclear-deal-a-coming-catastrophe&Itemid=139)