

Nonproliferation and Strategic Stability in South Asia



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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a bi-monthly seminar on “Nonproliferation and Strategic Stability in South Asia” held on September 26, 2017 at the Islamabad Club. The one day bi-monthly seminar started off with the recitation of the Holy Quran. In the Inaugural session, the President/Executive Director of SVI, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, presented his welcome remarks. He welcomed and thanked the honorable Guest Speaker, Amb. (R) Abdul Basit (President IPRI), distinguished Chair and Speakers and the worthy participants for affording valuable time out of their busy schedule and gracing the occasion with their presence. The seminar was well attended by the members of academia, diplomats, policy-making civil and military establishments and students from the field of strategic and nuclear studies, and international politics from prominent universities in Islamabad.



Dr. Cheema presented a detailed review of the state of nuclear deterrence, strategic stability and nonproliferation issues with special reference to South Asia. In his remarks he addressed the challenges staring in the face of Non Proliferation Regime (North Korea and Iran’s recent development), Pakistan and Indian nuclear build up, deteriorating bilateral relations, Indian Military doctrine, ongoing border skirmishes and how they can affect the strategic stability of South Asia. He argued that Pakistan is not solely responsible for strategic stability in South Asia, the equal amount of responsibility lies with India too but India is not bothered about the murky South Asian landscape. However, he hoped that common sense prevails among nuclear weapon states. He also criticized and condemned Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) for turning a blind eye and for their discriminatory approach in favor of India. In addition he urged Nuclear Non-proliferation regime to develop unanimously agreed upon criteria rather than choosing a favorite among the international community for the sake of its legitimacy.

After delivering welcoming remarks, Dr. Cheema invited the Chair and Speakers to formally begin the session. The discussion was chaired by Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi. The four imminent speakers for the session were Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi, Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal (Associate Professor, School of Politics and IR, QAU), Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema (President/ED,

SVI) and Prof. Dr. Tughral Yamin (Associate Dean, Department of Peace & Conflict Studies, NUST).

Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi articulated her views on “Politics of Nuclear Power Generation in South Asia”. While giving brief overview of nuclear energy she mentioned that there are 31 countries that operate nuclear power program and 40 percent of them are the developing countries. There are 14 reported states that are planning to initiate nuclear power programs. With reference to South Asia, she said, there are challenges that have to be overcome in order to secure nuclear energy. There is correlation between nuclear energy and proliferation of nuclear weapons. There are two arguments that compel attention; One, India and Pakistan both are non NPT nuclear weapon states that aspire mainstreaming in the global nuclear system. India is striving for its power maximization and recognized nuclear weapons state status to play a role in the global affairs and eventually to secure a seat in the UNSC. Two, India is the world’s fourth largest energy consumer and it has a three staged energy vision; thus, it aims at filling the gap between demand and supply. Being strategically on a privileged position for the US, India has convincingly fought its case globally to secure the Indo-US nuclear deal. In the backdrop of this deal and NSG waiver of 2008, India has exponentially increased its potential to secure nuclear energy with unchecked diversion of substantial material towards weapon growth



Dr. Abbasi enlightened the audience with the fact that India at present has 21 reactors under construction and 22 operational reactors. The capacity will be further increased to over 22,000 MW by the end of next decade. In the overall construct of energy generation, India aims at producing 200,000 MW by 2050. It is believed that 7 reactors out of 53 MW capacity are under construction, 18 are planned for the next phase of expansion, and about 63 proposed reactors are expected to become operational by 2035. After 2008 NSG waiver, India is increasingly involved in import and export of trade of nuclear technologies in recent years. These indicators suggest that India has already been legitimized for global commerce by offering benefits of NPT states. She further added that India has signed several civil nuclear cooperation agreements with many states including Japan, Russia, France, United Kingdom, South Korea, Czech Republic, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Namibia. It is for the first time India has signed

a civil nuclear cooperation deal, along with two more agreements with Bangladesh in April this year under which the two sides can supply and manufacture equipment and material for the atomic power plant. India has announced that it is collaborating with Russia to build the Rooppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh; the first initiative under an Indo-Russia deal to undertake atomic energy projects in the third world countries.

On Pakistan's energy demands Dr. Abbasi explained that Pakistan is an emerging economy that needs to bridge gap between energy supply and demand. Pakistan wants to secure energy to preserve human security in the backdrop of climate change, rising heat wave and for sustainable socio-economic growth and research and development. We understand that it offers a greater capacity factor, lower cost and environmentally safe source to Pakistan. Pakistan's growing population and rising economy in the backdrop of CPEC and connectivity with BRI countries would continue to widen gap between demand and supply. Pakistan has remained diplomatically active for many years to secure membership status of the NSG to get access to global commerce but the global community is still reviewing Pakistan's request.

She further said, Pakistan's K-1; a small 137 MWe pressurized heavy water reactor (PHWR) that was operationalized in 1971; is under review by the PAEC because of its age at present. The second unit is Chashma-1 (C-1); a 325 MWe two-loop PHWR that was installed in May 2000. Its twin unit, Chashma-2 (C-2), was installed in 2011 with an upgraded capacity of 330 MWe. The net capacity of the above three nuclear power plants is 600-700 MWe, which amounts to 4.3 percent of the total energy mix. These nuclear power plants are not enough to bridge energy supply and demand gap. Pakistan, therefore, in 2008 announced to install another two nuclear power plants to its national grid that are C-3 and C-4 with the capacity of 320 MWe. Pakistan later announced in June 2013 that two 1,000 MWe class reactors would be installed as K-2 and K-3 that are expected to be finalized by 2020 and 2021, respectively. The fastest and cheapest way of dealing with the country's power crisis is through building K-2 and K-3 nuclear power plants. The K-2 and K-3 projects are an undeniable need for Pakistan as in recent times the production of electricity is far less than the demand. Pakistan is producing 755 MWe electricity from the existing nuclear plants and that would reach 40,000 MW by 2050. She opined that Pakistan has to increase its capacity to mitigate rising challenges and meet increased demands.

Dr. Abbasi expressed her worries that Pakistan is still heavily relying on fossil fuel and lagging behind in terms of meeting its future clean and sustainable energy demand. Pakistan has no economic strength and technological capability to follow through its plans for major nuclear energy development without outsiders' help. She suggested that Pakistan can't rely on fossil fuel if it is aiming for long term socio-economic growth. In the backdrop of BRI and CPEC, Pakistan's economy has become more integrated and interconnected that is set to grow and its energy demand would also rise with time. The most reliable renewable source of energy is nuclear energy that offers a tremendous potential for economic development, especially for developing countries to match 21st century demands in terms of economies and technologies.

Dr. Abbasi suggested that Pakistan should revisit its diplomatic outreach and come out of technological denial and nuclear isolation by reengaging the friendly countries rightfully and on justified grounds without being persistent on NSG membership. She raised the question as to why can't Pakistan strike a deal with Russia and China similar to the one that India had with the US? She concluded by saying that Pakistan's connectivity with regional thriving economies compels Pakistan to revisit its clean energy vision thereby connecting itself with global and regional forums determined to deal with the challenges associated with climate change. In the backdrop of the above developments, the NSG seems to become irrelevant while time demands substantial revisions in its structure and guidelines.

The second speaker Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal deliberated on the "Current Dimension of NSG Debate: Problems and Prospects". He said that Non-proliferation regime lacks constituency in South Asia. Despite engaging India by granting NSG waiver in 2008, India has not supported any nuclear non-proliferation related substantial group or treaty. Regarding the nuclear proliferation in South Asia he stated that the critical examination shows that India's vertical proliferation is steadily growing whereas Pakistan's nuclear program especially the advancement in missiles and delivery vehicles is also improving. He opined that though there is strategic stability in the region but the facts in the global politics alarm us about the probability of instability.



While talking about the NSG and its functioning, Dr. Jaspal said that NSG is a cartel of technically advanced states. It is a mafia because it is not ready to permit non-NPT nuclear states to transfer their nuclear technology for the benefit of the rest of the international community. He also recalled that India was the cause of the creation of NSG which raises the questions about its legality and morality where India is being preferred while other are being prevented as recipient of the NSG benefits. He said that this behavior shows that in international politics; strategic or political issues, have the utmost priority while secondary priority is given to the economic issues, and norms come at the third level.

He mentioned that most important recent development took place in the last NSG Plenary Meeting that was held in June 2017 in Switzerland. It was decided that discussion on the technical, legal and political aspects of the participation of the non-NPT states in NSG will be continued and an informal meeting will be convened in November 2017. Dr. Jaspal said that the NSG states are ready to accommodate Pakistan in NSG only if it adopts the IAEA full-scope safeguards. However, he opined that Pakistan is not ready to accept such kind of demand nor it would sign the NPT. On the other hand, India's strategic outlook/dilemma also does not allow it to undertake this proposition owing to China's big power status.

Dr. Jaspal said that the cartel is very much about NPT. The problem with NPT is that it was conceived and constituted during the Cold War era and the 20th century politics became the basis of the NPT. But now the world is entering into a new strategic competing era. The world is undergoing transformation since 2011-12 specifically after the US' Rebalancing strategy and with new alliances taking place. Simultaneously the US is once again investing in tactical nuclear weapons although it already possesses modernized weapons. He emphasized that it is important that the impact of all these transformations is analyzed.

He further stated that it is a mistake to think that the NSG can confront the nuclear proliferation. During the Clinton Administration, FMCT and CTBT were highly valued but lost their significance during the Bush era. Today the Trump administration looks at these measures as matters of the past. The need is to take into account the challenges that could be faced by the NSG in the coming months. Elaborating on the challenges he stated that the NSG might be taken as a measure relevant only to the past; second, the challenge of NSG addressing the membership issue

of non-NPT member states; and third it is its lack of credibility. He also mentioned that the most important development in regional context is the recent India-China border tussle and India's increasing significance in the US strategic order coupled with Pakistan's plummeting status in the US calculation. This trend carries definite impact for the forum of the NSG because there are three categories of the states at this platform; first, pro criteria based states led by China; second, states favoring the country based approach led by the US; and third are the hardliners (stick to accommodate only NPT signatories) or amenable states (agree to accommodate both India and Pakistan).

Dr. Jaspal concluded by saying that the prevailing trends are not in favor of NSG. He showed his concerns by saying that in future NSG will be further losing its credibility. Non-NPT do not have a chance to become the members of NSG. Moreover, NSG guidelines cannot bend non-NPT state to join NPT and those states will continue improving their nuclear weapons program (like North Korea) and as a result NSG will further lose its credibility.



The third speaker Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema presented insightful views on the “Current State of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia”. He defined that “Deterrence is a strategy intended to dissuade an adversary from taking a course of action prejudicial to a state’s primary interests / values on the basis of a credible nuclear weapon capability communicated / signaled in a way that if the adversary undertakes that ‘prejudicial’ action, it will suffer an unacceptable loss more than the stipulated gain from the ‘prejudicial’ action. Deterrence can best be understood with reference to the "3 Cs": capability, communication, and credibility. Any deterrent threat must meet all three criteria to succeed.” While talking about the state of deterrence in South Asia he said that deterrence discourse in South Asia has hardly changed since the Cold War. India has adopted the doctrine of credible minimum deterrence to disguise its development of a strategic triad and relies on deterrence by punishment (punitive retaliation). Pakistan has undertaken a posture of minimum credible deterrence focusing on the first use (deterrence by denial) as last resort lately assuming a posture of full spectrum deterrence (FSD).

Dr. Cheema explained Indian nuclear doctrine and said that Indian deterrence doctrine has recently been projected unofficially as a preemptive strategy. He quoted Vipin Narang's assertion presented in a paper at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Conference (2017) on nuclear policy and Non-Proliferation that: "There is an increasing evidence India will not allow Pakistan to go first, in the use of nuclear weapons and could launch a 'comprehensive preemptive first strike' to completely disarm Pakistan of its nuclear weapons so that India does not have to engage in iterative tit-for-tit exchanges and expose its own cities to nuclear destruction". However, Dr. Cheema said that the conventional wisdom from the nuclear military history since 1945 suggested that South Asia has passed through the discomfiting tribulations of preemptive doctrines and strategies. It's worth recalling that there is not a single example of an undertaken preemptive strike, whether failed or successful, against an adversary possessing nuclear weapons by any nuclear or non-nuclear weapons power because preemption is fraught with reciprocal annihilation and thereby rationally unacceptable.

He further said that Pakistan's posture of adequate conventional defence and Minimum Credible Deterrence (MCD) has finally become the cornerstone of its national security. With defence and deterrence inseparably linked, Pakistan complements conventional military asymmetry vis-à-vis India with Minimum Credible Deterrence based upon first use of nuclear weapons if required, recently reformulated as FSD. In 2014 and 2015, Pakistan tested a ballistic missile with a range of 2750 km, an air-launched cruise missile with a range of 350 km, as well as a 60 km range nuclear-capable short-range ballistic missile and nuclear-capable cruise missiles that could be fired from aircrafts and ships. In 2015, Pakistan entered into a deal with China for the supply of eight diesel-electric submarines. Pakistan is also working on a nuclear reactor for a possible nuclear-powered submarine to match Indian capabilities.

Dr. Cheema spoke about Indian nuclear force capabilities and said that India continues to prioritize work on the Agni family of land-based nuclear-capable ballistic missiles. It is currently conducting flight tests of a new road-mobile, canister-launched ballistic missile, the Agni-V, which reportedly will have a near-intercontinental range capable of reaching targets throughout China. The missile is expected to be inducted into service in 2017. India also continues to develop the naval component of its triad of nuclear forces in pursuit of an assured second-strike capability. The Indian Navy inducted its first indigenously built nuclear-powered submarine, INS *Arihant*, into

service in 2016. It will carry a two-stage 700-kilometre range SLBM that is currently undergoing testing. India is developing a more advanced SLBM that will have a range of up to 3500 km. In February 2015, India launched a program to build six nuclear-powered attack submarines. India currently operates a Russian Akula-II nuclear-powered attack submarine on a 10-year lease and may acquire a second vessel of the same class. Dr. Cheema also enlightened the audience about Chinese nuclear force capabilities and said that the nuclear equilibrium in South Asia is fast becoming trilateral and it will be difficult to manage.

He concluded his speech by saying that Pakistan is twenty-five years behind India in the installation of peaceful nuclear reactors and in the development of nuclear weapon capability. India has been a vehement opponent of non-proliferation regime as India called the non-proliferation regime as “disarmament of the unarmed.” He also quoted that Indian Ambassador to Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) said that IAEA allows the criminals of the world to roam free and putting all the babies in the chain. This means that non-nuclear weapons states are asked to not produce nuclear weapons while the P5 are free to develop nuclear weapons. This was the criticism of India for non-proliferation regime. This is the India which is today being given the status by the US and the West as a state with very good proliferation record. The reality is that the responsibility lies with India for leading proliferation in South Asia while it is still leading the nuclear arms race with Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Tughral Yamin expressed his views on the “Current Dynamics of South Asian Strategic Stability”. He explained that the concept of strategic stability was defined during the Cold War in terms of deterrence: the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was stable as long as both sides knew that each could respond in a devastating way to a nuclear attack by the other. He quoted Edward Warner (US Secretary of Defence’ Representative of the New Strategic Arms Treaty Talk) while explaining Strategic Stability that “most narrowly, strategic stability describes the absence of incentives to use nuclear weapons first (crisis stability) and the absence of incentives to build up a nuclear force (arms race stability); more broadly, it describes the absence of armed conflict between nuclear-armed states; most broadly, it describes a regional or global security environment in which states



enjoy peaceful and harmonious relations.” He briefly explained the bilateral treaties between the US and USSR that includes SALT I (1969), ABM treaty, SALT II (1979), INF treaty (1987), START I (1991), START II (1993) and New START (ratified Feb 2011).

He deliberated on South Asian strategic stability and said that it can be understood by taking into account the strategic double dyad that encompasses Pakistan-India & China-India, and a triad of India-Pakistan & China. He highlighted that in South Asian region, there are no bilateral or trilateral treaties to limit or reduce nuclear arms or conventional weapons and the stability in India & Pakistan relations is limited to Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). He showed his apprehension that there is no common strategic language to identify any spikes or dips in nuclear tensions as nuclear signalling can lead to misunderstanding.

Dr. Yamin elaborated the factors disturbing the strategic stability in South Asia. He highlighted two broad reasons: one, unabated arms race; and second, aggressive strategies. While explaining unabated arms race he counted conventional arms build up, ballistic missile defence shield, MIRVs, nuclear submarines, growing stocks of fissile material and cruise missiles as the developments influencing the strategic calculus. Moreover, under aggressive strategies he mentioned offensive doctrines that include cold start, first strike and massive retaliation. He further explained how admission into the nuclear club, India-US civil military accord, special waivers, unilateral support for India’s NSG membership, India’s hostile propaganda and no talks between India and Pakistan is putting an impact on the strategic stability of South Asia.

He opined that strategic stability will be further disturbed unless India and Pakistan resolve outstanding disputes, reduce tensions, de-incentivise conflict, limit and control the arms race through bilateral/multilateral treaties and set numbers on conventional forces. He further cautioned that the future of strategic stability in South Asia is bleak unless: one, visionary leadership on both side come to terms with each other without compromising on legitimate national interests; second, people on both sides recognize that perpetual conflict is in no one’s interest; and third, regional and international powers play the role of an honest broker in stabilizing the situation.

Dr. Yamin concluded his presentation by sharing a news ticker from September 25, 2017 which read that “Fighter jets, drone deals and shared concerns over Afghanistan’s security look set to dominate the agenda when the US Defence Secretary James Mattis visits India this week.” He also

quoted Pentagon statement “the United States views India as a valued and influential partner, with broad mutual interests extending well beyond South Asia”. He analyzed in milieu of these statements that Delhi and Washington share common concerns about Afghanistan, with President Trump announcing a new strategy for the war-torn country last month which cleared the way for the deployment of thousand more US troops. The President has also recently urged India to increase assistance to Afghanistan’s economy. Experts are not expecting any Indian boots on the ground, though there may be some role for Indian military expertise in supporting the US-led training and advisory mission with Afghan security forces. India has long vied with Pakistan for influence in Afghanistan, building dams, roads and a parliament building in the troubled country.



The session was followed by the interactive discussion and question and answers from audience. Mr. Osama, member of Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad, asked about future ambitions of Pakistan and China vis-à-vis India and the US. In answer to his argument Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal opined that Pakistan is a state that is always more engulfed in its regional dynamics rather than seeking a status of international power. He supported his answer with the fact that the capability of Pakistan’s longest missile is not enough to aspire to be a global power but to rather counter Indian ambitions. He viewed current alliance between Pak-China and India-US as a result of ever changing strategic, economic and political Interests.

Mr. Abdul Qadir, Student from Defence and Strategic Studies Department QAU, raised voice over dubious and dual standards of NSG member states on issue of India’s admission into the cartel. In response to his question, Dr. Jaspal criticized the norms and objectives of NSG. He said that the group is losing its goals due to the vested interests of the US and its allies. In addition, India is favored because it is considered as more attractive option (economically and politically) rather than Pakistan. However, speaker strongly supported the view that the international community is not just limited to the US and its allies but comprises other members as well and if Pakistan wants to secure its interests and strategic balance in south Asia it should approach other states as well rather than remaining stuck to China only.



Mr. Fareed Ahmad, student of M.Phil at International SAARC University, asked Dr. Yamin about Indian Military modernization and its impact on Strategic Stability with special reference to options which Pakistan should pursue within its fiscal resources. Dr. Yamin in his reply explained that Pakistan is standing on a point where it cannot afford to carry on with its military build-up to counter India without boosting its economy. Defence and economy are co-related; one cannot forego any of the two for longer period of time.

Mr. Shams referred his inquiry towards Dr. Abbasi on the issue of options available for Pakistan to seek Nuclear Power Plants for Electricity generation. In her brief but crisp reply Ms. Abbasi stated that due to lack of membership of NSG, Pakistan is facing problems and cannot seek international market to pursue its peaceful objectives in nuclear technology. In her conclusion, she criticized NSG on its antediluvian norms and practices.



Mr. Ahmad, lawyer and journalist from online news agency, asked Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema regarding the prevalence of 2nd strike options in strategic environment of South Asia. Dr. Cheema supported his answer with logic of common sense and warned about the damaging effects of Nuclear Arms Race in South Asia. He enfolded the current situation of Pakistan and Indian nuclear capabilities to explain the impact of First strike, which in his view is suicidal as both parties possess



second strike capabilities. However, at the same time, possession of second strike capability by both sides is a guarantee of strategic equilibrium and deterrence which should be the end goal of nuclear capable state.

Seminar came to conclusion with remarks from Lt. General (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi; the session Chair. He presented three main arguments; first, the issue of morality, which in his view is less relevant for powerful and is of more relevance for less powerful. Second, he stated that war is not just all about kinetics but dimension of war fighting is changing. Lastly, he pointed out that learning about deterrence and strategic stability is mostly came in the aftermath of Cold War which should not be considered as the only examples to learn from. He was of the view that changing

dynamics of international politics (development of Iran and North Korea's nuclear weapon program) should also be studied to infer knowledge about strategic stability and deterrence.

At the closing of session, Chair invited the Guest Speaker, Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit (President IPRI), to deliberate upon the topic.

Amb. (R) Abdul Basit started his address with an analysis of the regional issues between two South Asian nuclear states and said that Pakistan is facing an adversary that is shrewd and dubious and is very dangerous in nuclear environment. Pakistan has always been on its toes with India because of its past experiences. He mentioned the incident of Indian possession of Chemical weapon even after signing the treaty with Pakistan on prohibition of its usage. With such adversary Pakistan needs to keep working and



re-evaluating its options. Pakistan cannot consider that strategic balance will go on as it is because of Indian ambitions. He highlighted the issue of "Indian Joint Armed Force Doctrine" in his speech and its implications for the region and persuaded the need for strategic community to go through this recent development and to come up with counter narratives for it to maintain the strategic balance and deterrence. He suggested that it is necessary for Pakistan to develop the counter measure and find alliances because in isolation Pakistan cannot resolve its predicament on issues like membership of NSG. He concluded his speech with the advice that it is the responsibility of Pakistan to pursue its objectives in a proactive manner, as diplomacy always works in grey areas not in pure black and white.

The bi-monthly seminar was attended by members of academia, think tank representatives, retired generals, ambassadors, media personals and students of various local universities. Dr. Cheema profoundly thanked the august audience and mentioned that their presence made this seminar a successful endeavor. He offered special thanks to the speakers/chair and expressed his appreciation to all the guests for actively participating and making the discussion interactive. He also appreciated the research and secretarial staff of the SVI for their hard work.

Media Coverage

Bi-monthly Seminar on “Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Strategic Stability” was covered by following media house

Daily Country News

<http://www.dailycountrynews.com/epaper/main.php?action=epaper&id=main&page=8&dt=30-09-2017>