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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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



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Editor's Note

With the brutal lockdown in Indian Occupied Kashmir now approaching its second month, the plight of Kashmiri Muslims continues unabated as the Indian government downright ignores the broad-ranging condemnation it has faced from all corners of the world. This was markedly evident in the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in which Prime Minister Imran Khan, in a historic speech, raised the issue in a forceful and vociferous manner.

Linking the plight of the Kashmiri people with the rise of Islamophobia and the fallacious links between Islam and terrorism, Mr. Khan was right to state that the onus was on the international community to rightfully intervene in a situation that had all the signs of a potential genocide in the making. A genocide that could be carried out at the hands of a hateful Indian government, borne out of the fires of fascism, much like the world had witnessed during the lead up to the Second World War. He emphasized that unless the world collectively takes responsibility, Pakistan would have no option but to fight against such blatant Indian aggression which is a direct assault on Pakistan's national and regional interests.

His statement is further bolstered by the fact that any conflict between India and Pakistan would be between two nuclear armed neighbors. Considering the general apathy on display from UNSC members (except China), it is striking that the international community needs reminding of the grave risks such a conflict would pose, not only for South Asia, but for the entire world at large. While the grave dangers posed by India's escalatory and incendiary rhetoric alluding to its nuclear weapons remains ever present, Pakistan's self-projection as a responsible nuclear weapons state, no matter how rational, appears subdued amidst a world where the ludicrous concept of nuclear warfighting is once again gaining traction. This too is an alarming development which needs to be acted on collectively by the international community.

It is hoped that this issue will help readers in staying up to date with the current political environment and that they will find the analyses useful. The SVI Foresight team invites and highly encourages contributions from the security and strategic community in the form of opinion based short commentaries on contemporary political, security and strategic issues. Any suggestions for further improvements are welcome at our [contact address](#). Previous issues of the SVI Foresight can be accessed [here](#), and can also be found on our [Facebook page](#). For more information, please visit our website at www.thesvi.org.

M Waqas Jan
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India Amidst the Follies of a Winnable Nuclear War

M Waqas Jan

As tensions between India and Pakistan simmer over the deteriorating situation in Kashmir, the ever-present specter of nuclear war continues to dominate present discourse. This has been apparent in the way both India and Pakistan have continued to leverage the threat of using nuclear weapons at each other, keeping well in mind the effects of these threats on both domestic and international audiences. Last month's [statement by India's Defense Minister](#), on the reexamination of India's No First Use (NFU) policy presents a worrying case in point. Taken in the context of the last 4-5 years however, this statement represents a growing trend in which India's foremost leaders have come to institutionalize a policy of nuclear brinkmanship against Pakistan through increasingly bellicose rhetoric. Not to mention one of the world's most sustained and costly military modernization programs that has been publicized as greatly expanding India's power projection capabilities. Capabilities which in turn not only extend to India's Western Borders but to the entire South Asian and Indian Ocean regions.

Together, both the rhetoric as well as the unprecedented defense spending are arguably aimed at projecting a more assertive and militarily capable India. An India that is fed up from playing second fiddle to a rising China, and from being limited from its true potential by a recalcitrant Pakistan. As such, this current manifestation of India is almost a farcy from what several analysts had described five years back. This was when the likes of [Happymon Jacob had termed](#) India as a 'reluctant power' facing a rising superpower i.e. China and a 'revisionist power' in Pakistan. Instead, as evident in the BJP's nuclear brinkmanship, it is India now that is revising the status-quo in an entirely reckless and single-minded fashion. Especially during a time when both Pakistan and China have openly declared their focus to be on shared economic development at a wider regional level, what India's incessant saber-rattling has done is essentially estrange itself further from two strategically and potentially crucial neighbors.

While a large segment of the Indian population may celebrate this new-found panache and daring which the BJP government is projecting as part of its nationalist ethos, this approach has in fact led to an unprecedented level of destabilization throughout the region. One wonders whether this 'devil may care' approach of the current Indian government is the kind of assertiveness and regional leadership that even moderate analysts such as the above-mentioned Mr. Jacob had argued for five years back. After all, even with respect to countering Pakistan, many in India have long called for developing closer ties with China particularly keeping in view a long-term strategic perspective. A view that is built more on regional stability and cooperation as opposed to pandering to a faux sense of supremacy.

Yet, instead of such elusive stability, what this Indian state has done is willfully stoke fears of war. All despite the fact that it is still not able to dominate Pakistan within the conventional and sub-conventional realms. At least not on the global stage where the will to project military force is equally matched by the ability to do so. This for instance was more than evident in February's aerial engagement between the two countries following which India was left considerably bruised and shaken.

While many in Pakistan have taken this to be the successful manifestation of a viable conventional deterrent capability, it has simultaneously increased the risks of India resorting to a pre-emptive or escalatory nuclear strike as the preferred means of assuring military victory. What's more, if Pakistani strategists are to go by the current rhetoric and signaling coming out of India, the risks of such a strike seem to stem more from a vain an entitled sense of supremacy, rather than any real measured, or calculated approach to nuclear deterrence and/or strategy. Such ensuing ambiguity and uncertainty add immensely to the already heightened risks of an accidental or even miscalculated step towards the nuclear tipping point.

Ironically, the only option Pakistan has been left with is to signal its own intent and commitment to the counter value targeting of Indian cities. This has been emphasized in all of Pakistan's most recent ballistic missile tests, which instead of showcasing a newly acquired capability have been carried out as training launches of what already comprise its nuclear arsenal. This includes last week's [training launch of the Ghaznavi Missile System](#), which stands as one of the first SRBMs inducted into service by the Pakistan military. Designed as a Scud type ballistic missile that is accurate, road mobile and capable of hypersonic speeds, this most recent test is aimed at showcasing its potency as a second-strike platform, capable of challenging even some of the most sophisticated Ballistic Missile Defense Systems currently deployed by India. In effect, a stark reminder that all Pakistan needs to do is to get a few of these off the ground to negate any advantage that a counterforce or pre-emptive strike may seem to serve India.

Hence, while the threat of Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint remains as ominous as ever for the most densely populated region in the world, it is extremely worrying to think that either Pakistani or Indian policymakers would consider nuclear warfighting as a viable means to victory. Whereas Pakistan's stance on the use of nuclear weapons has been clearly stated as a means of deterring a large-scale conventional assault for the sake of regional stability, the repeated allusions to a first or pre-emptive strike by Indian policy-makers seem to be geared more at spreading fear, shock and awe amidst the general population. Of all the fears the world once had over a North Korean, Iraqi or even Irani fanatic gaining hold of an atomic weapon, it is a wonder how Indian policymakers are unabashedly getting away with playing the part of the unstable and unpredictable nuclear armed zealots of the world.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/09/15/india-amidst-the-follies-of-a-winnable-nuclear-war/>

Modi's Ultranationalist Hindutva

Shamsa Nawaz

The neo-fascism of Modi with his chivalrously extravagant politics of ultra-nationalism, casteism, populism, authoritarianism, nativism, xenophobia and opposition to liberal and parliamentary democracy hold most worrisome conjectures of socio-political division both within and outside India, in the region and for the world. The revocation of Article 370 and 35(A) of the Indian constitution is routing India fast towards fascism. Adopted in 1956 and enforced in 1957, Pakistan never accepted the application of the Indian constitution on IOK anyways and supported its right for self-determination in accordance with the UN resolutions. The status of IOK is yet to be determined. The anti-secular policies of the ideational right-wing BJP inundated with radicalism have curved the issue from territorial dispute to a human tragedy. Their communitarian vision of *Hindutva* with pronounced fanaticism of religious particularism holds no desire for communal and cultural affinity while positing not only Hindus against the Muslims but other minorities living in India as well.

Secularism, when first introduced in India in 1851, was meant to promote societal harmony while upholding the reasoning and sensitivity to the general values of tolerance. However, ever since the rise of *Hindutva* ideology, it anchors more on the *Hinduist* subscription driven towards the modern-day centralized and theocratic state. The politics of beef, *Ghar Wapsi* or the lynching terror are all linked with the movements of Shuddi (reconversion to Hinduism started by Arya Samaj) and ambitious Snagathan, which have proven blowback to modernity and secularism both.

Hindutva is derived from the two terms “Hindu” and “Tuttva”, which means the ways of the lives of Indian people, their culture and social ethos. It is based on diverse Hindu principles with varied interpretations which generally are more individual specific and evolve with individual interpretations. This gives liberty to Modi to instill his version of *Hindutva* more to fortify his vote bank and RSS commitments. Moreover, unlike Gandhi and Nehru’s opposition to ‘hegemonic majoritarianism,’ Modi’s interpretation is unfamiliar with the freedom of thought inherent in the Indian history and its romantic wherewithal, experienced at the times of Ashoka and qualified during the times of the Mughal Emperor Akbar respectively. Modi’s revocation of Article 370 and 35 (A) is not only a sad disrespect for the Indian constitution but its glorious history as well.

Unfortunately, the virulent reincarnation of *Hindutva*, particularly since 1990’s when BJP picked up its rise, is more richly assorted with the ideas and ideals of ‘societal engineering’ towards the multi-polarization of the Indian society instead of union in diversity. The emergence of various groups and sub-groups found it even more difficult to ascribe themselves with any single identity either. On the other hand, the political leaders found it easier to vend populous notions. Savarkar in the “Essentials of *Hindutva*” emphasizes on the requirement of identity to gel the nation by the redemption of ‘Indus Valley Civilization’, so that it may not face the same fate which Greek, Egyptian or Roman Civilizations had met. This insecurity resounded more during the British and Muslim rule in India and is generously exploited by Modi’s aids to promote Greater India or *Akhand Bharat*.

Nonetheless, history has proven that communalism permeates serious socioeconomic discrepancies. It happened in Italy and Germany where Fascism and Nazism gained roots in the first half of the twentieth century. Fascists consider [liberal democracy](#) as obsolete and believe that the whole society must be mobilized under a [totalitarian one-party state](#). Preparing the nation for armed conflict is considered essential. Fascism relies on both political violence through imperialism and armed violence through war to ensure national rejuvenation. The statement of Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on August 16, 2019 at Pokhran, in the northwestern India to commemorate the death anniversary of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee “Pokhran is the area which witnessed Atal Ji’s firm resolve to make India a nuclear power and yet remain firmly committed to the doctrine of ‘No First Use.’ India has strictly adhered to this doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances” merit comparison between fascist’s ideology and Modi’s *Hindutva*. Economic difficulties being more realistic are addressed simultaneously. Fascists advocate a [mixed economy](#), with the principal goal of achieving [autarky](#) (national economic self-sufficiency through [protectionist](#) and [interventionist](#) economic policies).

Modi’s economic policies are more in sync with neo-fascism since they fall short of total closed economy. At present India’s aspirations to become a world power are more bruised by its predominant poverty-stricken subsistence level. Though the percentage of the population living below the poverty line in India decreased to 22% in 2011-12 from 37% in 2004-05, according to [data released](#) by the Planning Commission on July 2013, its economic ascendancy has several hiccups. For instance, while achieving food sufficiency in production, India still accounts for a quarter of the world’s hungry people and home to over 190 million undernourished people. The incidence of poverty is now pegged at nearly 30 percent. As per the Global Nutrition Report (2016), India ranks 114th out of 132 countries on under-5 stunting and 120th out of 130 countries on under-5 wasting and 170th out of 185 countries on prevalence of anaemia. Anaemia continues to affect 50 percent of women including pregnant women and 60 percent of children in the country. Brought by Tata and Jundal to the power corridors, India is aware of Modi’s economic decadency as well. Humanity in India moans in these transitional times of challenged international system by their ruler.

<https://foreignpolicynews.org/2019/09/06/modis-ultranationalist-hindutva/>

Pakistan's Skepticism over India's NFU Policy Stands Validated

Haris Bilal Malik

The South Asian region is widely regarded as vulnerable to the threat of nuclear war. This is largely because of the Kashmir issue's dangerous potential as a 'nuclear flashpoint' between India and Pakistan. This is evident in how the use of nuclear weapons is currently being debated at the highest levels of both the Indian and Pakistani leadership against the backdrop of the latest rounds of tensions over the disputed territory. This includes recent statements by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh which have alluded to India rolling back its '[No-First Use](#)' (NFU) policy regarding the use of nuclear weapons. In the wake of the ongoing hostility in the region, the likely shift in India's NFU policy is to have long-lasting implications for peace and stability across the region.

Keeping in mind the implications of the above-mentioned statement, Pakistan's response has been articulated at various strategic levels. For instance, Prime Minister [Imran Khan](#) in his article for the [New York Times](#) condemned this likely shift by terming it as a 'not-so-veiled' nuclear threat to Pakistan. Foreign Minister [Shah Mahmood Qureshi](#) condemned India's assertion of changing its NFU policy by terming it highly unfortunate and reflective of India's irresponsible and belligerent behavior. At the military level, Pakistan has always doubted India's NFU policy to have ever existed in the first place. This was reflected in [Pakistan military's](#) official spokesperson, Major General Asif Ghafoor's statement in which he clearly said that India's 'no first use' was its sole prerogative and if it wanted to change its policy then it was its own choice.

Contrary to India's declared NFU policy, Pakistan has never made such a commitment or statement and has deliberately maintained a policy of ambiguity concerning a nuclear first strike against India. This has been carried out with a view to assuring its security and to preserve its sovereignty by deterring India via both minimum credible deterrence and full-spectrum deterrence capabilities. This posture asserts that since Pakistan's nuclear weapons are for defensive purposes in principle, they are aimed at deterring India from any and all kinds of aggression. Therefore, even now Pakistan is likely to keep its options open and still leave room for the possibility of carrying out a 'first strike' as a viable potential deterrent against India if any of its stated red lines are crossed.

Furthermore, India's NFU policy is hardly verifiable or justifiable when taken at face value as a credible policy option because of Indian offensive missile advancements and growing nuclear arsenal. This is also evident from India's enhanced missile developments which include; hypersonic missiles, ballistic missile defence systems, enhanced space capabilities for intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance and the induction of nuclear-powered ballistic missile capable submarines. Such recent developments indicate that India's nuclear weapons modernization is aimed at continuously enhancing its deterrence framework including its second-strike capabilities. As such it is also evident of India's shift towards employing a counterforce instead of a counter value approach to nuclear warfare. By continuously seeking an edge over Pakistan in terms of more accurate strike and, intelligence gathering capabilities, supported in tandem by enhanced BMD systems, the shifting trends indicate that India might find it

more feasible to abandon its NFU policy and flirt with the possibility of a more offensive as opposed to defensive nuclear posture.

However, since Pakistan has long doubted India's NFU policy anyway, India's attempt to rethink, reconsider, reinterpret or shift away from its NFU policy would do not really make much difference for Pakistan's strategic calculus. The first amendment in the NFU policy in [2003](#) which was based on the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security's (CCS) review of its nuclear doctrine had already shown signs of the hollowness of this policy. According to this review, if the Indian armed forces or its citizens were attacked with chemical or biological weapons, then India would reserve the right to respond with nuclear weapons. Moreover, India's preparations for a limited war or a low-intensity conflict against Pakistan under its more recent doctrines such as the [2017 Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces \(JDIAF\)](#) and the [2018 Land Warfare Doctrine \(LWD\)](#) are also based upon more proactive offensive strategies and indirect threats of preemptive strikes which have long since eroded the credibility of its NFU policy.

Hence, based on this context, the likelihood of India shifting its declared position on the No First Use nuclear policy against the backdrop of ongoing tensions over the Kashmir issue presents a highly irresponsible and destabilizing move by the Indian government. Especially during a situation where exercising calm and restraint are of the utmost importance, India has willfully put at stake the delicate strategic balance which exists in the South Asian region. This is likely to pose severe and long-lasting implications for peace and stability across not only the South Asian region but the entire world at large.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/09/29/pakistans-skepticism-on-indias-nfu-policy-validated/>

Highlighting India's WMDs at the UNGA

M Waqas Jan

As Prime Minister Imran Khan prepares for his first address to the UN General Assembly, he does so against the backdrop of heightened geo-political tensions between both India and Pakistan. These include an unprecedented mix of issues comprising the recent upheaval in Indian administered Kashmir, the recent aerial engagement following the Balakot incident, as well as increasing poverty across the region that is already being exacerbated by climate change. As is, Mr. Khan most definitely has his work cut out for him when garnering international support and interest for such a broad range of issues. However, while all the above represent long entrenched matters that have already been highlighted in some form or another, there also lies the often underrated, yet looming potential of nuclear conflict between both India and Pakistan.

Rooted in the age-old politics of the Kashmir dispute and its all-pervading potential as a nuclear flashpoint, the threat of nuclear war presents a very cogent and ominous reality that has often been taken for granted by outside observers, especially over the last few years. As a result, this threat has often been conveniently brushed aside as mere politicking or saber rattling as part of the many absurdities that characterize international politics in this day and age. It's as if the very sanctity and destructive power of nuclear weapons have all but lost their relevance in times where quick limited wars under the 'hybrid' or '5th Generation' mantras have given way to the more conventional campaigns of the past. Gone are the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which lost with the memories of a past generation, remain as historical stubs. Encapsulated in a few grainy black and white images from a bygone era.

Yet, even though the prevailing nuclear deterrence framework following the end of the Cold War may have ruled out the possibility of a globally devastating nuclear conflict between the world's major powers, the case of South Asia has remained wholly different for several reasons. Pakistan and India, as two de-facto and declared Nuclear Weapons' States have for the last two decades come perilously close to the brink of all out nuclear war at least 3-4 times. The 1999 Kargil Conflict, the military standoff following the 2001 Indian Parliament attacks, the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2016 Uri attacks all involved the potential of irrevocably altering life on earth, as a direct result of both countries' nuclear weapons capabilities. The attack on an Indian convoy in Pulwama earlier this year represented the latest iteration of this threat when both countries engaged in an unprecedented aerial engagement. This led to a dramatic escalation in tensions as evident in the large-scale deployment of forces to border areas, as well as consistent nuclear signaling and posturing in the form of carefully targeted statements as well as several ballistic missile tests, aimed at communicating the nuclear threat. Even though third-party mediators have since brought about a considerable de-escalation in tensions (as they have done in all the above-mentioned crises) there has still existed a pervasive sense of unease and uncertainty throughout the region.

This uncertainty has since been greatly exacerbated by the Indian Parliament's unilateral decision to repeal the Jammu and Kashmir region's special constitutional status last month. As a result, the nuclear

dimension is again being forcefully played out in the political rhetoric coming out of both countries, especially from India. However, while the risks of a nuclear conflict have remained unabated within any conflagration between India and Pakistan, what's extremely worrying is that this aspect has become increasingly normalized with each passing crisis. That despite the grave danger and urgency which such rhetoric should evoke amongst policymakers on both sides, the allusions to the threat of nuclear war have become routine, almost to the point of being irrelevant. As both countries have found space for conducting military operations below the nuclear threshold, this apparent depreciation of the risks of a potential nuclear exchange presents an alarming insight into the strategic calculus being employed by both countries.

More recently however, this lack of appreciation of the risks of nuclear war appears to have reached new lows within the Indian policy framework relative to Pakistan's stance on the issue. This is because while Pakistan's nuclear deterrence framework is directly premised on the threat of all out nuclear war, India has in the recent past increasingly resorted to a policy of nuclear brinkmanship by toying with the notion of a 'winnable' nuclear war. Buoyed by its conventional and economic superiority, India's strategy has been to systematically discredit Pakistan's willingness to resort to the nuclear option in what Indian policymakers have often mockingly referred to as 'calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff'. All while making incendiary statements referring to the all-out destruction and annihilation of Pakistan, in the same vein Iran used to once make against Israel, or North Korea has done against the US and its East Asian allies.

Hence, with India's leaders playing the role of the aggressive and unpredictable madmen in charge of nuclear weapons, the onus is now increasingly on Pakistan to highlight the dangers of Indian weapons of mass destruction as currently being in the hands of some of the world's most fervent extremists. Whether Prime Minister Imran Khan will be able to successfully make such a case at the UNGA is unclear at this point. However, it is unlikely that the irony of the situation will be lost on his audience comprising the rest of the 191 delegations in attendance at the UNGA.

<https://pakobserver.net/index.php/2019/09/25/highlighting-indias-wmds-at-unga/>

Sensitizing the World: Imran Khan at the UN

Shamsa Nawaz

Reverent towards the regional integration, gracious of international order, *Kashmiri* freedom fighters in Indian Occupied Kashmir are unjustifiably complicit in the torture and mass detention. On the other hand, “Howdy Modi” is devotedly welcomed by the venerated US President Donald Trump as his cherished “modern day fascist”. Modi was assured of not being complimented as a “favorite dictator” by Trump like he did to General Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, of Egypt. Perhaps, trading goods and services of \$142.1 billion (2018) with India is more worthwhile than the lives of 1.47 crore (2019) humans besieged by savagery and truculence, depravity and inhumanity in a curfew ridden region of IOK for the last almost two months.

Brutally pelted by pellet guns, the *Kashmiris* are persistently intimidated by over 800,000 Indian soldiers and their black laws for the last several years. Who would win at the UN this year ---the ambassador of peace, an envoy of humanity, the representative of regional connectivity, the legate of international order from Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan; or the tyrant of a mercantile world, an emblem of ferocious philosophy of *Hindutva* and a lifelong soldier of an extremist group, Rashtriya Swayemsawak Sangh (RSS), Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had never faced a riddle of choosing between its objective and compulsion ever since its inception in 1948. The non-consummation of its Security Council Resolutions is already embarrassing keeping its members tight lipped with the sole exception of China. As such the Security Council’s basis for maintaining international peace and security by encouraging bilateralism or through arbitration is collapsing. That vision which the UN had held of promoting friendly relations amongst nations on the basis of equality and the principle of self-determination while emphasizing economic, social, cultural and humanitarian values has been severely jolted by India, simply via its influence as one of the strongest economies of the world. India has undoubtedly pushed the world into a blind alley.

IOK is a state where successive Indian governments have stationed one soldier for approximately every 12 citizens. Unchecked, unpunished and legitimized in an environment of polarized society by decades of conflict, the question of self-determination could not have been more difficult for the world community to define as it is today. The revocation of Article 370 by India, which gives a special status to *Kashmiris* to decide their own fate has no legal or constitutional justification. This change of the status of Kashmir is in violation of the commitment made by India, to the United Nations on the Kashmir issue.

UN Resolutions on Kashmir

01 Resolution of the Security Council of April 21, 1948
02 Resolution of the Commission of August 13, 1948

03 Resolution of the Commission of January 5, 1949
04 Resolution of the Security Council of March 14, 1950
05 Resolution of the Security Council of March 30, 1951
06 Resolution adopted by the Security Council on 24th January 1957, concerning the India- Pakistan question
07 Resolution adopted by the Security Council at its meeting on 20th September 1965.

Source: "UN Resolutions," Kashmir Valley, kashmirvalley.info

Similarly, its brazen and systematic crimes against humanity infringe Article 12 of the flagship human rights treaty of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also. India has ratified it itself. The Bharatiya Janata Party's decision to settle 200,000 to 300,000 Hindus in IOK in the three disclosed and two undisclosed composite Hindu townships for non-Kashmiris is already in contrast to Article 370 of the Indian constitution. Similarly, acceded to by India itself, socio-economic customary international law and the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights (ICSECSER) have been ruthlessly jeopardized by India. Both are international laws since 1976.

Going back to the history, in the Instrument of Accession (IoA) signed on October 26, 1947 by the then ruler Raja Hari Singh, it is clearly mentioned in Clause 5 that accession terms cannot be varied by any amendment of the Act or of Indian Independence Act unless such an amendment is accepted by him as a supplementary instrument. Moreover, Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, which stemmed out of Article 370, gave powers to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to define permanent residents of the state, their special rights and privileges.

Nevertheless, the Indian government has done everything to subvert, restrain, misrepresent, discredit, interpret, intimidate, humiliate, disgrace, purchase or simply execute the people of Kashmir and their rightful desire for self-determination. The Kashmiri peoples' sullen silence under curfew cannot be considered acquiescence. One may agree with Arundhati Roy in her belief that when governments are openly supportive of a pogrom against members of a minority community, they are fascists and clearly fall under the premises of state terrorism. It chillingly transforms the democracy into a 'Demon-ocracy'.

The world must realize that justice delayed is justice denied. It creates even bigger problems like it has done today by bringing two nuclear states towards a Cuban Missile Crisis like situation. A realpolitik inspired 'pick and choose' approach is utterly inappropriate. When terrible things are happening, you cannot simply look away – and that's what the United Nation's Security Council has been sadly doing particularly in the case of Kashmir. The deep reluctance of Western powers to criticize India for strategic, geopolitical and economic reasons has dangerously deepened the crisis further afield.

<http://southasiajournal.net/sensitizing-the-world-imran-khan-at-the-un/>

Iran's challenge to U.S supremacy in the Middle East

Haris Bilal Malik

The United States as a global superpower has been maintaining and projecting its military and political supremacy for decades. The U.S has ensured its military presence all over the world through its technological advancements and an unrivaled number of military bases and naval fleets across the world. Inspired by its military might, the U.S has deliberately opted for intervention strategies as apparent in its ongoing campaigns in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, despite US military prowess, Iran has through its most recent actions emerged as a considerable challenge to the U. S's supremacy and role as a security guarantor in the Middle East. Unless the US has learned from its previous mistakes it is likely that it would embark on another disastrous intervention. Only this time, with a much better-prepared adversary and even more disastrous consequences.

The war in Afghanistan which is considered as the longest war in U.S history seems to be going nowhere despite the deployment of the world's best-equipped military force. The same is the case with the U.S intervention in Iraq where even after almost two decades the U.S has still not managed to fully withdraw its forces and call its campaigns a success. Subsequently, the U.S was compelled to reassess its strategy of military interventionism as the only prospects for ending this prolonged war even now only through talks with the Taliban. Although the U.S has somehow managed to install a democratic setup in Iraq, the presence of ISIS in Iraq and the terrible security situation there raises several questions on U.S credibility and efficacy throughout the entire Middle East.

Despite being widely regarded as a major impediment to US interests in the region, Iran was widely regarded as being no match for the capabilities and might of the US military. This perception, however, was turned on its head when [Irani made missiles and UAV drones](#) were discovered to have penetrated Saudi Air defenses to strike with unprecedented precision at the heart of the [Saudi Energy infrastructure](#). The purported damage to these facilities accounts for more than half of the Kingdom's total output, amounting to about [5%](#) of the global oil supply or about [5.7 million barrels](#) per day. Although Iran has denied any involvement in the attack Irani backed [Houthi rebels](#) have however openly claimed responsibility.

Nevertheless, the overall impact was that such an attack was successful despite Saudi Arabia, being one of the world's largest arms importers, is a major buyer of advanced weaponry from the U.S. These include state of the art fighter jets and sophisticated air defence systems. For instance, even though the said oil facilities were under the defence shield of the U.S [Patriot surface-to-air system \(PAC-2\)](#), one of the most advanced systems in the world, it failed to deter and defend against these reported cruise missile and drone attacks. The lapse was such that even U.S Secretary of State Michael Pompeo had to justify it by admitting that even some of the finest air defence systems do fail sometimes. Against the backdrop of this episode, it seems like Iran has positioned itself in a much better position over the U.S backed Saudi challenge in the Middle East.

The U.S's withdrawal from the [JCPOA](#), Iran's harassment of western [oil tankers](#) and the most recent controversy over the [US drone](#) purportedly shot down by Iran in June this year have continually heightened US-Iran tensions. In all, these instances have also led to the growing possibility of the U.S taking on Iran militarily as a direct consequence of its more interventionist policy. This is also evident from the U.S's excessive naval presence in the [Persian Gulf](#) which is aimed at pressurizing Iran. On the other hand, Iran is allegedly carrying out a covert nuclear program, has been working on growing its missile arsenals and is in the process of acquiring precision strike systems. The build-up of an asymmetric naval-air-missile threat to shipping in the Gulf and nearby waters in the Gulf of Oman are all examples of Iran's expanding military muscle. All these trends show that Iran is belligerently expanding its role in the Middle East region while directly challenging U.S supremacy both militarily and politically.

Hence, while the recent wave of challenges which the U.S has been facing in Afghanistan and the Middle East continue to undermine the US's credibility as a security guarantor in these regions, Iran has dramatically taken that challenge up a notch quite visibly. The cancellation of US-Taliban peace talks, the enhanced tensions with Iran over the nuclear issue, and the recent standoff between Iran and U.S backed Saudi Arabia over the Yemen issue all serve as major challenges for the U.S's ability to play a decisive role in the region. At present, the U.S is facing a dilemma either to shamefully and gradually withdraw from these regions or to plunge headfirst in another destructive intervention. Consequently, the U.S might need to seriously rethink and revisit its strategy of military intervention against every considerable problem in these regions. Moreover, it may need to completely revamp its concepts of why, when and how to wage a war overseas. This is because at the present the confidence which the U.S once inspired in its role as the sole global superpower capable of unilaterally influencing security issues anywhere in the world has severely diminished.

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US Strategy after the INF treaty: Implications and Projected Outcomes

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Thirty-one years ago, US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty placing a curb on nuclear weapons after decades of Cold War competition. Although the treaty persisted through to the end of the Soviet Union, it started showing signs of aging as early as the mid-2000s. Not only did the treaty govern land-based nuclear delivery systems, it also barred the US from pursuing certain conventional precision strike systems for ground-based and maritime strikes. With President Trump's withdrawal from the treaty on August 2, 2019 and Russia following suit, the INF is effectively a dead letter now.

Since the security environment has drastically changed in the last two decades, the time is ripe for looking closely at what to expect from US strategy and tactics, now that America remains free from the treaty's restrictions.

From America's point of view, the terms defined under the INF treaty have been out of step with the contemporary security environment. It has put the US and its allies at a relative disadvantage compared to China, as Beijing, not being a signatory to the INF treaty, has freely developed land-based missiles. Whereas Washington, under this treaty, was barred from doing so since it prohibited the United States and Russia from possessing, producing, or testing land-based ballistic and cruise missiles capable of ranges between 500-5,500 kilometers, including both conventional and nuclear-armed missiles.

However, Chinese experts have largely viewed the U.S. withdrawal as emblematic of a more aggressive U.S. nuclear and missile posture as well as a means for Washington to pressure Moscow. The US withdrawal from the INF treaty by citing China as one of the reasons gives a loud and clear message to Beijing that Washington is now in a strategic competition with it. As the obstacles for the US to develop and deploy cutting-edge ground-based medium and intermediate-range weapon have been removed, perhaps China would try to counter the new and upcoming US capabilities by further enhancing its investments on missile technologies and other countermeasures.

Even though leaving the INF treaty is not a magic bullet that completely addresses American concerns, it does pave the way for much-needed possibilities for the US to reset its military balance vis-à-vis China. Washington has a solid opportunity to turn the tables now. As a short-term response to balance China militarily, the US could deploy intermediate-range land-based missiles on its own as well as its allies' territories along the Western Pacific region. Weapons capable enough of denying China the use of surrounding coastal waters would act as a powerful deterrent against any potential Chinese aggression.

But the US would find this onerous since China, by never being a part of the INF Treaty, has produced and tested a wide range of land-based ballistic and cruise missiles. The entire United States already lies within China's range. As a result, the demise of the INF treaty could now lead to a potential nuclear arms race between the US, China and Russia. But for the US to increase its short- and medium-range capacity

in the region, it would first need allies willing to host such facilities. As of now, it is quite hard to imagine either Japan or South Korea agreeing to host such weapons on their territory.

The INF Treaty being one of the most important diplomatic watersheds has also served as a foundation for the security of Europe. But now that the treaty is dissolved, there have emerged a number of implications for the US and its allies' security interests in the region. In this regard, the US can be expected to adopt the following approaches. First, it could begin by enhancing its sea-launched nuclear deterrent. This would allow Washington to pose a viable deterrent for Moscow's intermediate-range missiles in the region without deploying American missile defense systems on European soil. Next, America could also expand the production and development of its ballistic and cruise missile arsenal to counter any contingency operations for the future. The US must ensure that it stays technologically superior against its potential adversaries in this arena.

The long-term strategy, however, is more likely to be focused on how Russia perceives the West now and has accordingly shifted its strategy towards a more offensive posture. If Russia considers itself on the offensive side now because of the decline of the West, the US could be forced to further shore up its trans-Atlantic alliances. This can be achieved over the long-term by expanding NATO further into the Russian sphere of influence by incorporating Georgia into NATO and then further expanding it to Bosnia, Belarus and Moldova as well. However, the ramifications such a move would pose in terms of a Russian response cannot be underestimated either.

In 1987, the INF treaty played a major role in relaxing Cold War tensions. But today, amidst the revival of great power competition, the US is self-purportedly fighting with one arm tied behind its back. With the US and China on the brink of a new major power competition, it is important for policymakers on all sides to prevent rising tensions from causing a major crisis. As a result, it has now become important for the US to formulate and implement policies that characterize its changed mindset on how it deals with both Russia and China as strategic rivals. The US could expand NATO, facilitate in aligning its Allies' strategic outlook and further ensure that it expands its defense capabilities so that the safety of its European and Asian allies stays intact, while also ensuring that other US interests abroad also remain protected. If, however, US policy remains hesitant and reactionary, there is a real danger that the United States will not be prepared for the challenges a post-INF world has in store for it.

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