



VISION

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Compiled & Edited by:
Haris Bilal Malik

Strategic Vision Institute
Islamabad

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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SVI 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 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

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.

Contents

Editor’s Note	1
China’s BeiDou Navigation System for Pakistan	2
Sadia Kazmi	
Evaluating China-Iran “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”	4
Sadia Kazmi	
Vindication of Pakistan’s Diplomatic Discourse One Year since India’s August 2019 Revocation	8
Haris Bilal Malik	
Russo-Indian Defence Logistics Sharing Pact to be signed: Shaking the Regional Equilibrium	11
Hananah Zarrar	
NTI Report 2020: Pakistan and Protection from Threat of Sabotage in Nuclear Facilities	13
Ahyousha Khan	
Assessing Pakistan’s Position in Theft Category of NTI Index Report 2020	15
Sher Bano	
NTI 2020 and Pakistan’s Cyber Preparedness	17
Basma Khalil	
Changing South Asian Regional Dynamics: Security Threats to Pakistan	20
Irfan Ali	
Analyzing the Decade of Non-proliferation Trends in South Asia	22
Hananah Zarrar	
Justifying Pakistan’s Air Based Nuclear Deterrent Posture vis-à-vis India’s Rafale Obsession	25
Haris Bilal Malik	
India’s Militarization of Outer Space: Implications for Pakistan	28
Sher Bano	
India’s Quest to Dominate South Asian Cyberspace: Challenges for Pakistan	30
Basma Khalil	
From a regional to a global player: Pakistan’s evolving metamorphosis	32
Sadia Kazmi	
Indo-US Enhanced Naval Cooperation: Implications for Pakistan	35
Irfan Ali	
Post-Galwan: The Indian Ocean is in the Focus	37
Ahyousha Khan	

Editor's Note

Chinese 'BeiDou Navigation Satellite (BDS) system' has recently been granted to Pakistan for military purposes. The author opines that with this integration, Pakistan can reduce its dependence on GPS. Likewise, the news about China and Iran concluding a possible trade and military deal worth the US \$400 billion promises a much-needed economic relief to the latter. However, it is very unlikely that it would undermine CPEC in any way. A prosperous and stable Pakistan with a peaceful and developed Iran would be highly conducive for China's bigger BRI Initiative. August 2020 marks the completion of the first year of India's August 2019 annexation of Kashmir. In this regard, one of the articles highlights that during this period, many significant developments have taken place which has considerably intensified the Kashmir issue at the global level. Despite not getting any support from the Gulf States and the OIC, Pakistan is still successful in its dynamic diplomatic discourse over the Kashmir issue. The India-Russia 'Defence Logistics Sharing Pact' would strengthen their defense partnership. This would further serve as a major step for India towards enhancing its regional significance. Consequently, South Asia would be pushed towards instability and conflicts. One of the articles covers the changing regional dynamics of South Asian and how they pose severe security threats to Pakistan. In this volume of the *SVI Foresight*, various aspects of the NTI Index Report of 2020 have been analyzed in detail. It is opined that Pakistan's ranking in various categories has significantly improved over the years. It is of grave importance that this year NTI has finally recognized Pakistan's commitment towards the safety and security of its nuclear material and facilities. Quite recently, India has acquired Rafale fighter jets from France. Since then, there has been an obsession in India about its prospective combat role including nuclear capability. The author opines that the presence of nuclear-capable Rafale in IAF inventory would provide a qualitative edge to India which would further complicate the dynamics of escalation in South Asia. However, Pakistan's forthcoming JF-17 Block-III with its deep strike capability seems to be almost at par with India's much-hyped Rafale jet. Similarly, the prospects of nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia could only be possible by mainstreaming and universalizing the global non-proliferation regime by following an unbiased approach. In addition to these, Pakistan's evolving metamorphosis from a regional to a global player has been assessed. The author depicts that with the help of CPEC Pakistan has already embarked upon a journey towards economic regionalization in the globalized world. The Indo-US Enhanced Naval Cooperation in the Indian Ocean and its Implications for Pakistan have also been deliberated upon. In addition to these, it is narrated that in the Post-Galwan environment, India is in pursuit of alliances for its strong foothold vis-à-vis China in the Indian Ocean. A very insightful and important subject; India's aspiration of the Militarization of Outer Space and its implications for Pakistan are highlighted in this volume. Last but not the least, another article covers that India's Quest to dominate South Asian Cyberspace would pose challenges for Pakistan. The author believes that, as India has already acquired offensive cyber weapons, Pakistan needs to draw certain boundaries in this regard to further integrate this threat with the overall security calculus of national security. It is hoped that readers will find a good blend of articles focusing both on conventional and unconventional aspects of the contemporary security discourse in South Asia.

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

Research Associate
Haris Bilal Malik

China's BeiDou Navigation System for Pakistan

Sadia Kazmi

China with its 'BeiDou Navigation Satellite (BDS) system' having been fully functional on 23rd June 2020 has consolidated its position among the countries with global navigation satellite systems (GNSS). The only three other countries with their own GNSS are the US that has GPS, Russia which has GLONASS, and Europe with Galileo navigation system. The BDS will not only put an end to China's reliance on the US-owned GPS but with already more than 400 million users worldwide – and growing -it will significantly break the GPS' monopoly. However, China aims to follow its most cherished principle of 'inclusivity' which it seeks to achieve in possibly two ways: one, it has been vocal about its preference for 'interoperability and compatibility' with the other GNSS; and second, it stands for enhancing 'connectivity' by extending BeiDou commercial services across the BRI states. This was already part of the BRI plan termed as 'Information Silk Road' in the 2015 White Paper. Although last year in July China and Saudi Arabia expressed strong inclination toward cooperation in the military use of BeiDou, so far, a fully unrestricted military partnership has only been granted to Pakistan Armed Forces other than the Chinese government and People's Liberation Army (PLA). Pakistan armed forces have been availing this opportunity since 2014 soon after the visit of Premier Li Keqiang in 2013.

The BeiDou navigation system has earned a unique reputation owing to the fact that the satellites are simultaneously operating at three orbital regimes i.e. low earth orbit (LEO), medium earth orbit (MEO), and geosynchronous orbit. Other existing GNSS usually only operate at one of these levels which currently is the MEO for GPS, GLONASS, and Galileo. With 24 BeiDou satellites operating at MEO at a distance of 20,000 kilometers, it promises to provide much broader coverage of Earth with 10 meters location tracking accuracy and lesser chances of transmission disruption and signal delay. Along with this China has launched 3 satellites into geosynchronous orbit allowing for continuous monitoring of a specific point on Earth at a distance of 35,000 kilometers. 3 more satellites in the inclined geosynchronous orbit provide a figure of 8 coverage over the Asia Pacific region with 5 meters location tracking accuracy. At the same time, the restricted military access allows for 10-centimeter location tracking accuracy in comparison to the GPS that has a 30-centimeter range.

This also implies that Pakistan can benefit from all the BeiDou features including positioning, navigation, short message communication, as well as from the military services including accuracy, precision, timing, etc. This would particularly be useful to monitor and ensure smooth progress on the CPEC projects as they are mostly infrastructure development projects with roads and railways that can be seen and observed with this highly sophisticated technology sufficiently safeguarding land and sea-based transportation routes. This allows Pakistan a strategic card against CPEC naysayers and deters potential saboteurs especially India

and the US that are visibly upset over this development and are bent upon associating and highlighting predominantly military dimension to the BeiDou navigation system.

Nonetheless, Pakistan and China's strategic space partnership has indeed been fortified. Pakistan too can reduce its dependence on the GPS as the BeiDou system claims better internet and navigation technology with a hundred times more accuracy. Now that an alternative is available and comes from a more reliable ally, GPS may not even be a preferred option for Pakistan. It will also lead to less intervention and manipulation by GPS. The military component of course cannot be ignored as the targeting of both nuclear-armed and conventionally armed missiles are essentially dependent upon the satellite navigation and BeiDou just adds that to Pakistan's capabilities. It has been quite instrumental in Pakistan's satellite communication and missile guidance system. Raad II cruise missile, Ababeel ballistic missile, and Babur cruise missiles' inboard system enable them to use the BeiDou navigation system enhancing their precision, accuracy, and lethality. Pakistan is able to avail 24/7 surveillance with the help of around 55 satellites. Similarly, the JF-17 fighter jet of the Pakistan Air Force is powered by the BeiDou positioning and navigation system. A technology that orbits the Earth at 20,000 kilometers and above cannot easily be destroyed or even disrupted. Hence, any attempt at that may prove to be costly as well as futile. Not only would it be in violation of the space laws but may provoke a strong reaction from China. This means that Pakistan's missile delivery system would remain pretty much unaffected during a conflict situation. This further ensures Pakistan's full spectrum deterrence credibility. Being a dual-type navigation system BeiDou provides services for both commercial and military purposes. While the commercial services are freely available for public use, the military services are restricted or licensed. Pakistan is also set to gain immensely from this system for transportation, agriculture, fishery, rescue missions, hydrological monitoring, weather forecast, disaster management and relief, land mapping, public security, farming, digital development, and smart port constructions.

Hence, this is yet another area where China-Pakistan cooperation promises significant gains to both. No doubt BDS has enhanced China's prestige as a country that is sufficiently capable of safeguarding its national security, economic and social development through indigenously constructing and operating such a high-tech system. It also holds immense potential to serve as a replacement for GPS to all the states that may have been looking for one especially the BRI states. By now China has exported BeiDou based products to more than 130 countries across ASEAN, South Asia, Eastern Europe, West Asia, and Africa. Apart from gaining economic and diplomatic clout, a geopolitical breakthrough may be in the waiting for China wherein it will be able to offer a China-led world order to the international community with most of them willing to join.

<https://foreignpolicynews.org/2020/08/03/chinas-beidou-navigation-system-for-pakistan/>

Evaluating China-Iran “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”

Sadia Kazmi

The news about China and Iran concluding a possible trade and military deal worth the US \$400 billion promises a much-needed economic relief to the latter. At the same time, it has raised some serious regional and extra-regional concerns. Although there is no set timeline as to when this “comprehensive strategic partnership” will actually materialize, the negotiations are underway between both the prospective partners. As per the 18-page draft of this proposed partnership, China will be able to invest in Iran for the next 25 years. Around US \$ 120 billion is to be used for the up-gradation of its transport and infrastructure, and around US \$ 280 billion will be dedicated to the Iranian petrochemical, gas, and oil sector development. Military cooperation is planned to be further enhanced with regular military exercise, intelligence sharing, training, and weapons development. It is interesting to note that Russia also figures in the military cooperation with Iran and China. As a result, it is very much expected that soon Russia and China will have unrestricted access to the Iranian airbases (at dual-use facilities in Hamedan, Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, and Abadan).

Transport and infrastructure projects include the construction of roads and railways. A stretch of 2300 km will be laid down connecting Tehran with Urumqi in the Xinjiang region of China. This will not only connect China with Iran but will be able to provide access to the Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan). It also plans to extend the other end of the road through Turkey to reach Europe. Hence three major regions will eventually be reaping benefits just with the construction of the Tehran-Urumqi road. Along with the road construction, a network of intercity railway lines will also be laid down. The major one in this regard is a 900 km railroad providing connectivity between Tehran and Mashhad in the northeast. The completion, up-gradation, and extension of the Tehran-Qom-Isfahan high-speed train line towards Tabriz in the northwest is also part of this strategic partnership. This assumes even more importance in this whole setup since Tabriz is home to major reserves of oil, gas, and petrochemicals. Despite the US sanctions on Iran and its strong and explicit reservations, China will increase the import of Iranian oil. Tabriz is also a connecting point between Iran and Turkey with the 2577 km long Tabriz-Ankara natural gas pipeline. In addition to these, a 628 km long Chabahar-Zahdan strategic railway line is yet another project which will eventually connect to Afghanistan. This project initially planned with India is facing controversies and delays at the moment and may probably be taken up by China. Other projects include the development of ports, and investment in Iran’s banking, 5G network, and telecommunication sectors.

It is anybody’s guess that this partnership will have to face a number of challenges not just in terms of strong opposition from the US but also from the detractors who may not

positively take China benefitting from Iran's strategic location and natural resources, and maybe intimidated by China's growing influence in Iran with massive opportunity to exert influence in the Persian Gulf. Attempts will be made to sabotage the development projects. Keeping that in mind, China plans to position around 5000 Chinese security personnel for the protection of its planned projects in Iran.

As the groundwork for this partnership was initiated four years ago in 2016 when President Xi visited Iran, this shouldn't come as a surprise, neither to the regional states i.e. Israel, KSA, and the UAE nor to the extra-regional stakeholders namely India and the US. The only surprise to look out for is when China and Iran would actually accomplish this feat, especially when the US strongly discourages any economic relief for Iran by the international community including China lest Iran consumes that for its Uranium enrichment activities.

China will have to face three major challenges: the finalization and implementation of the deal will be in defiance of US' opposition and sanctions on Iran, and hence will be under continuous castigation by the US; the second challenge would be to mitigate apprehensions among the local Iranians as the leaked details were being kept secret from the Iranian Parliament and the people – hence, putting their doubts to rest and earning the local support by adding more transparency would be crucial in accomplishing the desired goals; and third and equally glaring challenge is to strike a balance between Iran and its other three (anti-Iranian) partners in the region. Even though China enjoys formal economic and military ties with KSA and UAE as part of a “comprehensive strategic partnership” arrangement with them, this progression with Iran might provide them with enough rationale to sever ties with China. This will make China lose two major sources of its oil imports in the middle east and a substantial market for its arms. This may not happen abruptly, but the possibility cannot be ruled out. Israel is also observing the development with great worry as any plan to prop up the Iranian military and economy would be taken as strengthening Iran against Israel. China may not have this intension, but Iranian-Israel hostility may compel Israel to exercise all the possible political and diplomatic options to pressurize China, and if need be, explore asymmetrical tools to sabotage any development on the intended plan. Hence, a current low-level partnership between the two, wherein China is investing in Israel high-tech sector, may have to face some sort of friction. China will have to constantly walk a tight rope for its ambitious plans with Iran without jeopardizing its equation with the other three Middle Eastern partners. As China is already facing grievances in its neighborhood, troubles in the South China Sea and the Asia Pacific, it wouldn't want the same pattern to be replicated in the Middle East.

However, this golden opportunity to expand influence, secure its access to resources in the Gulf, and emerge as a real power at par with the US, are all too lucrative incentives for China to simply forego. The deal will allow China to build a port at Jask (Hormozgan province of Iran) just outside the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the world's seven most important

strategic chokepoints. 40 percent of its total 70 percent oil imports that come from the gulf will be protected with China itself overlooking and maneuvering activities at Jask. Not only will this provide sufficient insulation against the US in the event of conflict/war, but it will also massively boost China's geostrategic position in the region. For Iran also the opportunity to bring Caspian Sea oil and gas to the Southern Iranian ports through pipelines for export to Europe and Asia makes this deal extremely worthwhile. Decades-long economic suppression and the US-sponsored isolation has made it desperate for a break. China has come with offering an economic lifeline that can just not be ignored by Iran.

One state which may immediately be impacted by the deal is India. The local Indian newspapers while flashing the prospective deal in all dailies reported that Iran may have dropped India from the Chabahar port project as well as the Chabahar-Zahdan railway line project. This is yet to be substantiated as no confirmed statements from either side have been issued. Nonetheless, Iran has voiced its agitation on the undue delays from the Indian side for releasing the funds for the railway project and completion of the port. The US may have been the reason behind India's tardiness, but both should keep in mind that Iran wouldn't keep on waiting forever for India especially when it has a ready option available to fund its projects. This would also be a huge loss for India, which could otherwise gain access to Afghanistan through the Chabahar-Zahdan railway line bypassing Pakistan. This possible sidelining of India from the region should not be blamed on Iran or China but its closest strategic partner; the US. It is the direct result of the US economic stranglehold of Iran and immense pressure on India to stall a developmental project with Iran. China having a productive bond with Iran would also mean a conducive Iran along Pakistan's border. This will further hurt India's regional ambitions as it had been gradually increasing its foothold in Iran and Afghanistan with an aim to encircle Pakistan with hostile neighbors. However, in the wake of increasing Indo-US economic and strategic partnership, it doesn't look likely that India will be resuming work on the stalled projects with Iran.

Also, the US is visibly worried about this evolving China-Iran axis. It had been intending to reduce its military presence in the region but may have to rethink its decision now to ensure its influences are not undermined with growing Chinese footprints. This will result in the US prolonging its engagement and exhausting its previous efforts. This also means, the US dividing its resources at two fronts i.e. Asia Pacific and the Persian Gulf. The US also feels worried for the interests of its major Arab allies which perceive the deal will alter the regional status quo bringing Iran at par with them. China also plans to veto the extension of the US draft resolution of the arms embargo against Iran which is set to expire in October. The military cooperation component of the deal although claims to help Iran with fighting drugs, terrorism, and cross border crimes, will enhance Iran's capability to deal with its Arab neighbors and the US. Last but not the least it comes as a direct blow to the US prestige as a superpower as China and Iran would be able to undermine the US attempt to isolate Iran.

No doubt, with this massive investment, it is going to be the highest level of bilateral relations that China would have with any of its partners. However, this is not to suggest that it would undermine CPEC in any way. Such notions quickly started doing rounds soon after the news broke as part of the negative propaganda against CPEC. But an objective analysis offers rather hopeful prospects. With China – a time tested and trusted partner of Pakistan – at the steering wheel for development projects in Iran, Pakistan can be more at peace. Instead of pitting Iran and Pakistan against each other, China instead will be safeguarding the interest of both. A prosperous and stable Pakistan with a peaceful and developed Iran would be highly conducive for its bigger BRI plan. Hence, any misleading claims about this partnership overshadowing or undermining CPEC are far from the truth. This may even allow the long-shelved Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project to resume with China as the final destination. A formal trilateral partnership between China-Iran and Pakistan may not be ruled out.

<https://foreignpolicynews.org/2020/08/10/evaluating-china-iran-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/>

Vindication of Pakistan's Diplomatic Discourse One Year since India's August 2019 Revocation

Haris Bilal Malik

The prevalent security dynamics of the South Asian region are very much linked with the long-standing issue of Kashmir. August 2020 marks the completion of the first year of India's August 2019 annexation of Kashmir through the [Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act](#) of 2019. The act refers to the revocation of Articles [370](#) and [35A](#) of the Indian constitution. These articles had previously granted a special constitutional and autonomous status to the disputed Kashmir region. This move is a unilateral political annexation of the Kashmir under which the region has been further divided into two union territories [Jammu](#) and [Ladakh](#). The annexation has since then further worsened the situation as it also violates the UN Charter and the bilateral Shimla Agreement between India and Pakistan. By doing so, India wants to project its unilateral move as its internal matter. This is further inclined towards changing the demography of the Kashmir as currently, the majority of the population is Muslim. In this regard, India is bringing Hindu migrants in massive numbers from all over the country to relocate and settle them in this predominant Muslim majority region. India's unilateral moves have brought grave repercussions for the already volatile South Asian region and making it more prone to war and conflict.

During this period, many significant developments have taken place which has considerably intensified the Kashmir issue at the global level. Since then India's brutal lockdown in the region, the presence of [900,000](#) troops, and the resultant criticism worldwide have further internationalized the issue. At the diplomatic level, its significance is evident from the fact that it remained one of the crucial agenda items during the UN General Assembly's [74th session](#) last year. During the session, many prominent international leaders criticized Indian brutalities and emphasized on its peaceful solution. Likewise, it is also expected to be on agenda during the upcoming UN General Assembly [75th session](#) to be held in September this year. Pakistan's diplomatic resort to highlight the Kashmir issue at the international level seems to be impactful in the way it has opted for an appropriate foreign policy approach.

It would be pertinent to highlight how the international leaders have supported Pakistan's stance. For instance, Turkish President [Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), while addressing the UN General Assembly's last year's session criticized the Indian atrocities in Kashmir and also provoked the international community to pay attention to the conflict. Later on, in February this year, while addressing the joint session of Pakistan's parliament, he openly criticized India's unilateral moves. He termed the situation of Kashmir as 'alarming' and [reasserted](#) the Turkish stance of the settlement of the dispute through peaceful means and dialogue. Similarly, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia [Dr. Mahatir Muhammad](#) had criticized India by asserting that

despite the UN resolution on the Kashmir, it has been invaded and occupied. He emphasized the settlement of the issue through peaceful means under the UN mandate, thus supporting Pakistan's stance. Most recently, on [August 9, 2020](#), in response to Indian media's deliberate attempt to spread false claims regarding him of now being apologetic, he reasserted his previous stance. He said that despite knowing the economic backlash, he will not offer an apology for what he had at the UN forum, and keeping quiet against Indian injustices is not an option. [Prime Minister Imran Khan](#) in his recent tweet thanked Dr. Mahatir Muhammad for supporting Pakistan's stance on Kashmir.

Similarly, [China](#) is also known for raising the issue at both the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. Contrary to its previous role, a gradual shift in the [Russian](#) stance over Kashmir is also worth considering as Russia offered to mediate between both India and Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute. Likewise, the US, being one of the most powerful countries in the world has also offered for mediation twice especially during President Trump's tenure. In fact, during his maiden official visit to India in [February](#) this year, he reiterated his earlier offer to [mediate](#) between both countries and described it as a big problem in the region. This indicates the realization of the sensitivity of the Kashmir issue by influential countries like the US, Russia, and China. Hence more, it would likely add to the prospects of the international mediation aimed at a peaceful settlement. Such a realization also serves as an acknowledgment of Pakistan's stance on Kashmir as an international dispute which could only be solved through dialogue.

As another significant evidence of Pakistan's successful diplomatic discourse came during the UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres's](#) maiden official visit in February this year. He was deeply concerned over the situation in Kashmir and stressed on exercising maximum restraint by both the countries. He referred to the use of Article 99 of the UN charter that empowers the Secretary-General of taking any such issue to the UNSC whose existence can have potential consequences for international peace. This indicates that the worsening situation in Kashmir might provoke the UN Secretary-General to take the matter once again to the UNSC for a road map regarding its peaceful settlement. This is exactly Pakistan's stance over the years that the UN being the prominent international organization to ensure peace and stability in the world, must play its role of settling down the Kashmir dispute.

Hence, summarizing it all it is quite evident that Pakistan has been acknowledged several times by the international community as being the most important stakeholder vis-à-vis the Kashmir dispute. Despite not getting any support from the Gulf States and the OIC, Pakistan still succeeded in its dynamic diplomatic discourse over the Kashmir issue since its unilateral annexation by India. Unlike the Indian illegal occupation of Kashmir, Pakistan believes in the peaceful international settlement of the dispute led by the UN and the international community. Furthermore, Pakistan has always fortified any international offer of mediation

over the Kashmir dispute. However, it is quite unfortunate that Kashmir remains one of the oldest unsolved disputes at the UN Security Council. Pakistan needs to further enhance its diplomatic efforts to get vindicated its principled stance on the Kashmir dispute based on strong political and humanitarian rights grounds. This would likely add to its significance for Pakistan's diplomatic discourse and to further pressurize India. Under these circumstances, this would further pave the way for its peaceful settlement and ultimately restore peace and stability in South Asia.

<http://southasiajournal.net/vindication-of-pakistans-diplomatic-discourse-one-year-since-indias-august-2019-revocation/>

Russo-Indian Defence Logistics Sharing Pact to be signed: Shaking the Regional Equilibrium

Hananah Zarrar

Recently it has been circulated via Indian media that India and Russia are finally very close to their agreement on [Defence Logistics Sharing Pact](#). The agreement is expected to be signed by the end of the year 2020 during President Putin's visit to India. Originally, the pact has been under consideration for two years already, yet the negotiations did not take formal shape earlier. This pact would enable both countries to access each other's military bases and support facilities. It provides interoperability and military support and stationing of warships and aircraft. Moreover, the pact ensures access to mutual ports and exclusive economic zones for refueling purposes. This pact would likely serve as a revival of Russia's status as a leading arms supplier to India. Evidence of which also comes from the recent official visit of Indian Defence Minister [Mr. Rajnath Singh](#) to Russia. He requested for the supply of equipment like missiles, assault rifles, and significant ammunition as an emergency purchase, for which Russia has given assurance.

Russia aspires to reserve its permanent or long-term presence in the affairs of the Indo-pacific region. Under the possible clauses of the proposed agreement, Russia would gain access to key Indian ports like Mumbai and Visakhapatnam for refueling and other supplies. Russia seems to be following its strategic tradition to challenge the United States to retain its presence in every possible international affair. Since the US has India as its reliable regional ally against the Chinese rise and Russia's resurgence; it would be very unlikely for the US to lose its regional existence in near decades. For Russia, while the possible proposal of deploying a certain number of troops in each other's country, this pact would enable Russia to reserve its position at the door of the Indian Ocean. This would also pave the way for Russia to conduct exercises and use the exclusive economic zone of India in the coming years. Thus, for Russia, this agreement completely stands as a balancer for its regional existence vis-à-vis the US.

Besides military supplies and strengthening of the Russo-Indian defense partnership, the signing of the pact as early as by the end of this year can be seen as a major step for India towards enhancing its regional significance. In the same vein, as India aspires to become a dominant global power, such a pact would likely serve the purpose of India's enhanced footprint at the global level. The recent domestic and regional conflicts -precisely the Indo-China Border dispute along LAC- have reasonably drawn India towards regional isolation. This agreement once materialized would provide India with a chance to reassure its regional significance vis-à-vis China and its reach as far as the Arctic. Indian Navy will be able to smoothly transit through for exercises while the Indian Air Force would find it easier to deploy its aircrafts for joint exercises. Furthermore, access to Russian air bases and ports would ensure

India access to the Arctic, which would likely expand its political and strategic reach. For the same purpose, India has been an observing member of the Arctic Council since 2013. In this regard, the '[Indo-Arctic](#)' initiative, would likely provide India with an opportunity to reserve its future hold of the polar region via Indo-Pacific coasts.

The above-debated agreement predicts regional security and stability implications in the coming years. More than the United States, this pact would alarm the Sino-Russia and Pak-Russia relations in the future. The Indo-US strategic partnership would not be affected as far as India does not roll back from the US under any political pressure posed by Russia to get the agreement signed. Although, India already has similar logistics sharing pacts with the US, France, and Australia, yet the nature and timing of this agreement depict a strategic and defense support from Russia to India amid the latter's LAC skirmishes with China. Similarly, China might consider it as interference by Russia, which would likely provoke China to ensure the 'no-interference' vis-à-vis LAC's on-going conflict.

The United States aims to expand its collaboration with India as its forefront ally in the region to compete in China. Likewise, Russia also sees India as an equally strong market for its huge defense industry. Aspired to regional domination, India continues to expand its defence posture while following an offensive strategy. The Russo-Indian strategic relationship would likely put Pakistan in another dilemma for a competition of regional strategic relations with major powers vis-à-vis India. The United States and Russia, almost equally engaged with India in the defense sector while having bilateral disagreements on future arms control, are surely putting unintentional pressure on India to take either side in the long run while securing its defense modernization and regional hegemonic design. While Russia pretends to retain its neutrality approach towards China, India, and Pakistan to enhance its strong and unopposed regional presence; India would likely dismantle the regional peace with its offensive approach. Meanwhile, Pak-China strategic partnership is likely to strengthen with the passage of time and development in Indian strategy. Though the implications of this pact are yet to be analyzed once it is materialized South Asia would be pushed towards instability and conflicts. Such developments would likely challenge the threshold of provocative war in South Asia in the foreseeable future.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/18/russo-indian-defence-logistics-sharing-pact-to-be-signed-shaking-the-regional-equilibrium/>

NTI Report 2020: Pakistan and Protection from Threat of Sabotage in Nuclear Facilities

Ahyousha Khan

Nuclear Threat Initiative has recently issued the fifth edition of its biennial report titled “Losing Focus in a Disorder World”. As this year’s title suggests, the progress to secure nuclear material and facilities has slowed significantly in amidst of complex and catastrophic threats at the global level. These include; climate change, radiological dirty bomb, the threat of nuclear terrorism, cyber threats, misinformation, disinformation disruptive technologies, and the global pandemic. In this year’s report, NTI also released a first of its kind Radioactive Source Security Assessment.

The report maintained that these materials should be secured properly so that the possibility of their use as a dirty bomb could be minimized. Though this would not be an existential threat, it’s psychological, environmental, and financial consequences will be enormous. For instance, the area around any such detonation would become inhabitable for years. Similarly, threats from radioactive materials need to be addressed because they are used for research, agriculture, medicine, and industries.

Other than Radioactive Source Security Assessment, NTI Report has two thefts; Secure Material and Support Global Efforts, and one Sabotage category. The Theft-Secure Material category assesses measures and actions in 22 countries that hold 1 kilogram and more of weapons-usable materials. Likewise, the category of Theft-Support Global Efforts assesses the actions taken by 153 countries and Taiwan with less than 1 Kilogram of or no weapon usable nuclear materials. Both of these categories have been part of NTI Reports since its first edition back in 2012. However, the “Sabotage: Protect Facilities” category was firstly added in the 2016 NTI Report, and since then is part of NTI biennial reports. The Sabotage category is about assessing the security of nuclear facilities against sabotage in 46 countries and Taiwan. The term nuclear facilities include; nuclear power reactors and research reactors with 2 megawatts or greater capacity, reprocessing facilities, and spent fuel pools.

For Pakistan, the NTI index report 2020 is quite significant as it appreciates Pakistan’s commitment to nuclear safety and security. This year’s report has ranked Pakistan as one of the most improved countries in theft ranking of weapon usable nuclear material with an addition of 7+points overall. Pakistan’s overall score in the sabotage category is 58 out of 100, with 33rd position, better than its regional counterpart. Pakistan has improved its ranking with overall 5 points. In the sub-category of nuclear sites, Pakistan’s score is 80+, which is a very high score. Furthermore, for various other categories, Pakistan has achieved 58+ points in global norms, 89+ points in domestic commitments, and capacity, and 16 points in the sub-category of

the risk environment. Similarly, for onsite physical protection in the sabotage category, Pakistan has been awarded 20+ points. Although NTI is apprehensive about the condition of cyber-security and security culture in nuclear facilities all over the world, 25+ points were given to Pakistan in both these categories for its extraordinary efforts.

As the fact remains, that the NTI, is a non-profit organization not mandated by any state. So, its findings are prone to certain pre-assumptions and biases. Therefore, rankings and index issued by the NTI are not the final verdicts regarding any assessment it has made. Although NTI has a very elaborative framework and category system for analyzing the data is gathered on the base of a few pre-conceived assumptions, which makes the scores given to the countries more questionable. For instance, the NTI index assumed that more nuclear material and facilities mean more chances of an accident or illicit activity. However, the state can have more nuclear material with effective and detailed policies and measures. Moreover, in the sabotage category, if a country is scoring high in the domestic commitments and capacity sub-category and security and control measures sub-category, it means it realizes threats to its facilities and material from the outside environment. Any such state should be given a score in risk environment as well because they are managing their risks well. These measures are interlinked, how can a state securing good score in the protection of its material and facilities (meaning strong control and regulations measures) can score low in threats from illicit activities from non-state actors. Risk is an external factor, which cannot be eliminated; it can be only be managed, which most of the states are doing.

Reports from organizations like NTI are not the Gospel truth, but they do help in the creation of the academic and general discourse/narrative. Hence, it is of importance that this year NTI finally recognized Pakistan's commitment towards the safety and security of its nuclear material and facilities.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/17082020-nti-report-2020-pakistan-and-protection-from-threat-of-sabotage-in-nuclear-facilities-oped/>

Assessing Pakistan's Position in Theft Category of NTI Index Report 2020

Sher Bano

Ever since nuclear weapons have been developed, they have been the key component of the global strategic discourse based on their horrid probabilities. The nuclear disaster like Chernobyl that occurred during the safety test on '[Реактор болшой мoshchnosty kanalny](#)', a high-power channel reactor (RBMK type) resulted in the death of a lot of people due to acute radiation exposure. This incident has built perceptions like the possibility of meltdowns near to large metropolitan areas causing an unimaginable catastrophe. In more recent age, such scenarios have been eclipsed by one simple concern: what if terrorist organizations, through insider assistance, can acquire nuclear material? Terrorist organizations are integrated and sophisticated entities operating on multifarious levels of local, national, regional, and global platforms. Their access to the cyber-world, black markets, and human resources is evident from their magnitude of influence. For states maintaining nuclear facilities, civilian and/or nuclear, standards are set much higher. From fissile material to technical data, nuclear waste to outdated equipment, anything that has the potential to question national security is crucial in terms of securitization. To analyze these concerns a US-based non-profit organization 'Nuclear Threat Initiative' biennially publishes a report called NTI Index. Its purpose is to further strengthen the nuclear security of the states possessing nuclear material by recommending necessary measures that the governments need to take in this regard.

NTI index has three separate rankings which include two theft rankings and one sabotage ranking. According to the theft ranking of the 2020 NTI report, Pakistan has been assessed as the most improved country in terms of security of the nuclear material based on its nuclear security framework. Pakistan has been ranked 19th with a total of 47 points on the grading scale. It is important to highlight that most of the improvement has been identified in the category of 'Security and Control' measures with 25 points. Other than this Pakistan has also improved in the category of compliance with the 'Global Norms'. According to the report, it has strengthened laws and regulations that resulted in a significant boost in Pakistan's overall score.

It is worth mentioning here that there have never been any incidents like nuclear theft, nuclear accident, or kidnapping of any official related to the nuclear program. This has been ensured with the provision of a strong command and control structure of Pakistan's nuclear installations. These installations function under a very secure and strict framework in compliance with the international practices of nuclear safety and security. That is why despite successfully fighting a war against terrorism for the last 15 years, nuclear weapons or nuclear materials have never fallen into wrong hands. In fact, with time, Pakistan has further enhanced

its credibility as a responsible nuclear state primarily because of the adherence to international nuclear safety and security framework. In this regard, the safety of nuclear assets has always been the primary focus of both military and civil authorities. Contrary to such an adherence, there has been widespread propaganda at the global level against Pakistan's nuclear weapons going into the hands of anti-state entities. However, Pakistan's strong and secure nuclear security structure has proven that even considering the possibility of such action would be ridiculous. The nuclear assets of Pakistan have not been kept in one place; in fact, they are kept in the unassembled form under well secured physical and technical protection at various places across the country. Other than that Pakistan has a regulatory regime that covers all matters related to nuclear security and safety such as material accounting and control. These are aimed to prevent illegal trafficking, protect facilities and materials, and plan how to deal with radiological emergencies with NEMS (nuclear emergency management systems).

The report has also suggested some important steps that Pakistan needs to take to enhance its nuclear security structure. For instance, Pakistan needs to have more strict control and accounting measures. It has further suggested that Pakistan should also ratify the International Convention for Suppression of nuclear terrorism to prevent or prosecute any act of nuclear terrorism in the future. Furthermore, it urged Pakistan to voluntarily support IAEA which means that Pakistan will contribute to the nuclear security fund and will take part in the International Conferences of the IAEA on nuclear security. Similarly, it has also recommended Pakistan to further strengthen the regulations on insider threat prevention. According to the convention on the physical protection of nuclear material article [14.1](#), Pakistan must submit information to IAEA. Pakistan, in order to make its nuclear security regime even more sustainable and to address international propaganda, might need to be more open in sharing information related to its nuclear security measures. In this regard, Pakistan can invite IAEA to conduct IPPAS (International Physical Protection Advisory Service) mission, whose purpose is to help states further strengthen the national security regime.

According to the report, the overall international efforts to secure nuclear material against theft have slowed down in the past few years. There has been an increase in the declining score of the countries since 2012. This decline suggests that without any Nuclear Security summits and international events on nuclear security since 2012, the threats to nuclear security have increased globally. Other than that various terrorist events and cyber-attacks have made the global environment more hostile. Hence in such an international environment, Pakistan must continue playing its part to reduce the nuclear threat and to strengthen the global nuclear security regime.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/17/assessing-pakistans-position-in-theft-category-of-nti-index-report-2020/>

NTI 2020 and Pakistan's Cyber Preparedness

Basma Khalil

In the contemporary global strategic affairs, nuclear safety and security are widely perceived as the fundamental for any country to be recognized as a responsible nuclear state. Over time, the parameters of the nuclear safety and security have changed considerably. The emergence of sophisticated technologies has become one of the leading factors that contribute to the change in the dynamics of nuclear security. It includes all those technologies that are related to computers and computing systems. Presently, the major intimidations which states have been facing from emerging technologies are the cyber threats. The Nuclear Security Index (NTI) Report 2020 has also highlighted the importance of cyber technology for nuclear safety and security. In this regard, the NTI has taken into consideration the various security measures taken by the states that possess the weapon usable nuclear material. The assessment is aimed at critically identifying the emergent cyber threats to nuclear security.

In general, the NTI report has highlighted some of the basic elements for theft and sabotage of nuclear-related materials. For instance, the assessment of the number of sites, security control measures, gauging of risk environment, global norms, and abiding by domestic commitments. The NTI report 2020 has taken into consideration some key 'Security and Control Measures'. These include; on-site physical protection, prevention of insider threat, response capabilities, and security culture. It has analyzed nuclear safety and security from a new perspective. There has been an emphasis on the need of adopting new tools and indicators to measure the security of the nuclear infrastructure. It further highlights that countries that possess weapon usable nuclear material are improving cyber security regulations following the rapidly changing cyber threats to nuclear facilities. Although NTI suggests such measures the growing cyber threats to nuclear facilities still need a firm global response. In this regard, the integration of cyber security, physical protection, and protection critical of digital assets from cyber-attacks, creating awareness of cyber threats, and training of personnel with cyber risk scenarios are significant. Such frameworks are aimed at addressing the prevention of insider threat, the establishment of security culture, control and accountability procedures, physical protection, and response capabilities.

In the same vein, according to the report, to integrate physical protection and cyber security, and to protect critical digital assets, including systems related to physical protection, control, accounting, and safety of improved cyber tools, watchdogs are required at facilities to protect against cyber-attacks. The potential for cyber-attacks at nuclear facilities, as well as combined cyber-physical attacks should be taken into consideration while threat assessments. To identify weaknesses and to make continuous improvements, 'Threat Tests and assessments' are required regularly to identify weaknesses and to make continuous improvements.

Among countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials, Australia for the third time has been ranked at the first position in the sabotage ranking and for the fifth time for its security practices. Likewise, New Zealand and Sweden stand first in the ranking for countries without materials. It is very pertinent to highlight here that Pakistan's commitment towards nuclear safety and security, has also been duly acknowledged. In this regard, since Pakistan has adopted new on-site physical protection and cyber security regulations, it has been appreciated in the index. This would likely further improve Pakistan's existing insider threat prevention measures. Nevertheless, the 2020 NTI report has ranked Pakistan among the countries that have nuclear materials but its adherence to nuclear safety and security has been vindicated.

It is worth mentioning here that in the theft ranking for countries with nuclear materials, Pakistan has improved its ranking by an overall score of 7 points. In this regard, Pakistan has made major progress in the 'Security and Control Measures' category with an incredible (+25) points based on the new regulations. Also, Pakistan has improved in the Global Norms category with (+1) points. The strengthened laws and regulations have provided sustainable security benefits and resulted in improving Pakistan's overall score. Moreover, Pakistan's improvement in the Security and Control Measures category is quite significant. Over time, by improving +8 points in 2014, +2 points in 2016, and +6 points in 2018, Pakistan has steadily improved in the Security and Control Measures category. Owing to new regulations for on-site physical protection its score has improved since 2014. Whereas since 2018; the insider threat protection has also improved. When the report was first launched in 2012, since then Pakistan, unlike other states has improved its score in the security and control measure category with 25 points. This is an incredible improvement as it is the second-largest improvement among the related states.

At the national level, Pakistan has taken various initiatives including; the establishment of Cyber Forensic Laboratory at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), and the Computer Emergency Response Team (PAK-CERT) to deal with cyber-related threats. Furthermore, the National Centre for Cyber Security at the Air University also aims at making cyberspace of Pakistan more secure. It has affiliated Research and Development Laboratories working on projects related to network security systems and smart devices. To maintain such a status, in the longer term, Pakistan needs to further expand the scope of its existing national cyber policy framework. This would enhance Pakistan's capabilities to tackle cyber threats to nuclear security in a more efficient way.

Hence, the emergence of cyber threats to nuclear security both at the regional and the global levels needs to be addressed with greater cooperation among the states. Likewise, it is also essential to address the human factor for cyber security when insiders could unwittingly introduce or exacerbate cyber vulnerabilities. Pakistan needs to further enhance the role and increase the capacity of its specialized cyber workforce. In this regard, if required, the number

of highly skilled technical staff may be increased keeping view of the emergent cyber threats to the nuclear facilities. After acknowledgment of Pakistan's efforts in the NTI report 2020, this would further add to its compliance with the international practices of nuclear safety and security. Furthermore, regular training workshops for personnel should be organized. Pakistan must go for cooperation with other states to strengthen the global nuclear security framework. This would add to the international reputation of Pakistan as a responsible nuclear state. Nevertheless, Pakistan has improved a lot in the realm of cyber security and also improved the cyber-surveillance systems and watchdogs' frameworks. A broader National Cyber Security Strategy is the need of the hour to further strengthen the already established cyber security framework that would cover nuclear security as well.

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/18/nti-2020-and-pakistans-cyber-preparedness/>

Changing South Asian Regional Dynamics: Security Threats to Pakistan

Irfan Ali

In recent years, the emergent regional dynamics of South Asia have made it more significant at the international level. This is primarily because of the complexity of the territorial conflicts between India and Pakistan which poses threats to international security in general and regional security in particular. At the same time the economic potential which South Asia offers in the form of CPEC under China's BRI initiative, and India's relevance as a big market for the US holds immense significance. Unfortunately, the overall security calculus of the region is very much affected by India's aggressiveness towards Pakistan. For instance, in recent years, Prime Minister Modi's extremist policies have become the real bone of contention for the whole region. In this regard, the Pulwama-Balakat crisis of 2019 is a clear manifestation of India's aggressive mindset under his leadership. Simultaneously, Indo-China recent standoff in the Ladakh region, provoked by India also indicates this notion. This has further intensified the sense of insecurity, mistrust, and animosity between the two countries. Such a complex regional security environment, triggered by India would likely dominate the dynamics of escalation and war in South Asia along with a prospective fear of nuclear war.

Out of all the issues between India and Pakistan, Kashmir remains the long-standing issue. Security experts around the world view it as a 'nuclear flashpoint' between both the countries. On the other hand, the South Asian region has been facing non-traditional security threats as well. These include; food security, human security, environmental degradation, water crisis, and bio-threats, for instance, the COVID-19. Significantly, the global outbreak of COVID-19 has made non-traditional security threats even more relevant. South Asia also remains vulnerable to such non-traditional threats. Aside from all these factors, the South Asian region has been under the focus of prominent international players like the US, Russia, and China, based on their economic and strategic interests. The keen interests of these extra-regional global powers have also further complicated the security and political dynamics of the region. Particularly, the Indo-US strategic partnership based on enhanced military and nuclear cooperation has disturbed the balance of power in the region considerably. This would ultimately destabilize the whole region while having long-lasting implications for Pakistan's security at the traditional level.

To further analyze, it would be important to discuss how Pakistan has been facing severe security challenges at its eastern and western borders simultaneously. Both India and Afghanistan have been trying to harm Pakistan's interests for a long. In this regard, India's extremist and hawkish policies have been intensified in recent years. For instance, Prime Minister Modi has several times threatened Pakistan with the use of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, quite recently, following his jingoistic approach he became so aggressive by saying that India could [defeat Pakistan within seven to ten days](#). In the same vein, the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution along with continuous violation of Line of Control (LOC) by India has made the region more vulnerable to conflict.

India has also initiated an information war against Pakistan under which it has been defaming Pakistan at various international forums. By doing so, it has been blaming Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorist activities in the region. For instance, the Pulwama attack of February 2019, despite the Indian propaganda against Pakistan, many in the world believe that it was an Indian false flag operation. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is the other way around, as India itself is involved in terrorist activities inside Pakistan through its agency RAW. This is further evident from the arrest of Indian Spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving officer of the Indian Navy, by Pakistan's security forces. Likewise, there are shreds of evidence that the recent attack on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) building in Karachi was also backed by the RAW. Furthermore, an extensive increase in the Indian Defence budget every year indicates that it aspires to dominate the region militarily. Such Indian aspiration of attaining the regional and global power status has over the years destabilized the region.

In the west, Pakistan shares a border with Afghanistan, which is known to be the battle hub of the 'global war against terrorism' and civil war for the last few decades. Furthermore, the Indian presence in Afghanistan is also aimed at destabilizing Pakistan. In this regard, the Indo-Afghan nexus poses a serious threat to Pakistan's security. This is evident; as various terrorist activities inside Pakistan in the recent past have their backing and facilitation being done from Afghanistan. Surprisingly, Indian presence has been more observed in the areas near the Pakistan border. Contrary to such an approach by Afghanistan, Pakistan is still bearing the burden of reportedly [2.7 million](#) Afghan refugees. According to various official reports, these refugees have been a socio-economic burden on Pakistan's society. Moreover, these refugees have been involved and facilitated various terrorist activities inside Pakistan. Consequently, the country has suffered huge socio-economic and human loss, thus posing a serious threat to the internal security of Pakistan.

Hence at the present, the Hindutva lead extremist policies of India and its nexus with Afghanistan have overtly threatened Pakistan both externally and internally. The above-mentioned dynamics of security in South Asia in recent years further justify this perspective. Pakistan still believes in its principled stance of promoting peace and stability in the region and has been putting its serious efforts. In this regard, India needs to think rationally instead of following RSS and Hindu nationalist policies. Moreover, it is the responsibility of all regional states particularly India to work for promoting peace in the region. This seems to be the only way to ensure regional security and ultimately make it a prosperous region.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/19082020-changing-south-asian-regional-dynamics-security-threats-to-pakistan-oped/>

Analyzing the Decade of Non-proliferation Trends in South Asia

Hananah Zarrar

It has been more than two decades since Pakistan and India had carried out their nuclear tests. Since then, South Asia has come to the fore as a uniquely challenging nuclearized region of the world. The striking most aspect of this nuclearized region is the presence of three neighboring nuclear weapon states with rival history. Where the non-proliferation and disarmament efforts at the global level have significance, the volatility of South Asia and a continuous presence of escalation ladders have kept it more prone to the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons with offensive doctrines and strategies. This volatility is directly and indirectly linked with India's aggressive strategic expansion as well as its non-adherent behavior towards international nuclear norms. This threat perception and a series of provocative actions from India remain the vital cause of Pakistan's principled stance of neutral based mainstreaming in international nuclear arrangements.

Throughout this period, Pakistan and India both have been building up their nuclear arsenals in pursuit of their doctrinal and deterrence needs. However, they have been suspended to conduct more nuclear weapon tests. With a gradual increase in individual stockpiles, both the nuclear-weapon states now appear to have developed their fully functional arsenals, deliverable by a triad structure that include; air, land, and sea-based platforms. Some of these capabilities are yet to be incorporated and tested successfully. After building infrastructure for extracting highly enriched uranium and production of plutonium, both the states have established politico-military institutions dedicated to the security, safety, and survivability of their nuclear weapon programs. Meanwhile, along with the international acknowledgment of functional nuclear arsenals in South Asia, the demand for non-proliferation by the international community has kept on increasing. However, this has been impacted by the need of keeping the region strategically stable yet holding deterrence alive.

The fact remains that both India and Pakistan have been recognized as de facto nuclear-weapon states. Neither of the two is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), nor either of them has signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) due to criteria based exemption. Moreover, both countries carry individual reservations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) as well. While both the states remain active members of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), their roles have not always been considered [constructive](#) enough, by the international community, to be taken on board for international nuclear arms control arrangements.

Pakistan, subjectively, is being alleged by the international community, especially by the west of growing its nuclear arsenal aggressively. This has been in practice along with the

shadow of an accusation of horizontal proliferation for the past two decades. While falsifying the accused claims, Pakistan has repeatedly stood welcoming to any nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation arrangement. Nevertheless, Pakistan's threat perception has been India centric, based on the relevance of the latter's hostility as a significant national security concern. Consequently, Pakistan has kept its nuclear arsenal, posture, and nuclear doctrine with the same threat perception. Furthermore, Pakistan seeks for a non-discriminatory international approach towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Unfortunately, the biased approach of the international community towards the goal of non-proliferation like for instance, the favored grant of NSG membership to India has also been one of the biggest destabilizing factors towards regional non-proliferation.

In a [recent statement at the Conference on Disarmament](#), Pakistan laid out its concerns of proliferation and demanded some major steps towards non-proliferation from the international community as follows:

- A universal and equitable commitment by all states to complete verifiable nuclear disarmament,
- Elimination of the discriminatory and country-based approach in the current non-proliferation regime,
- Normalization of the relationship among signatory NPT states with the three non-signatory NPT nuclear-weapon states.

Such propositions depict Pakistan's genuine approach to seeking the true essence of non-proliferation in the region.

Contrary to Pakistan's approach, India has been pacing faster on its defense and strategic expansion to [modernize its nuclear arsenal](#). In this regard, the recently recorded new weapon systems including the acquisition of S-400 along with the acquisition of BMD systems to advance its existing nuclear-capable aircrafts, land-based delivery systems, and submarine-launched systems are worth considering. With the acquisition of the latest delivery mechanisms, India has already enhanced its military plutonium production capacity of up to as much as 150 to 200 nuclear warheads. Likewise, the recent canisterization of missiles shows Indian evolving doctrine from 'no first use' to the probability of first use. Whether the Indian strategy is aimed at countering Pakistan or China, it remains highly violating in nature and non-adherent towards non-proliferation.

Hence, India stands reluctant towards non-proliferation and so Pakistan in response. Comparatively, South Asia could have better tackled the vertical proliferation if India would have been acting responsibly towards global non-proliferation efforts. While the disarmament holds no prospect in South Asia, vertical non-proliferation seems to be vague and unachievable too. India's growing sense of China-centric nuclear posture and Pakistan-offensive expansion of

its nuclear arsenal would likely keep the region on the verge of greater instability. This would be further characterized by India's lesser concern of non-proliferation efforts in the coming decades as well. Mainstreaming both parties and universalizing the global non-proliferation regime with the inclusion of Pakistan and India following an unbiased approach would only serve the purpose. Only this could produce any fruitful outcome for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and fissile material in the region.

<http://southasiajournal.net/analyzing-the-decade-of-non-proliferation-trends-in-south-asia/>

Justifying Pakistan's Air Based Nuclear Deterrent Posture vis-à-vis India's Rafale Obsession

Haris Bilal Malik

India aspires to create its hegemony and ultimately dominate the South Asian region. For this purpose, along with other counterforce capabilities, India has been pursuing an overwhelming increase in its air power. This is further aimed at achieving offensive strike capabilities, particularly against Pakistan. Driven mostly with the acquisition of modern jet planes from its strategic partners like Russia, the US, and France. Quite recently, India has acquired Rafale fighter jets from France which are widely believed to be one of the most advanced fighter jets currently available in the world. Since then, there has been an obsession in India about its prospective combat role including its nuclear capability. It seems like India wants to portray it as a game-changer and a landmark strategic win over its regional counterparts Pakistan and China. Pakistan has also [feared](#) that these jets could be modified exclusively for the nuclear role which could further lead to the intensification of an arms race in South Asia. There is still an ongoing debate at the international and regional levels about the capabilities of the Rafale jets vis-à-vis Pakistan's aerial warfare capabilities. The debate has more significance in wake of the humiliation which India had faced in the hands of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) during the Pulwama-Balakot episode in February last year.

On [July 29, 2020](#), India received the first five Rafale aircraft out of 36 in total it had ordered. The controversial deal worth [the US \\$ 9.4 billion](#) after many setbacks was finalized in 2016. The jets, though delayed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, are scheduled to be delivered not later than 2022. The acquisition of Rafale has been quite controversial for India in various aspects. Initially, India had wished to purchase 126 of total jets when the negotiations started between India and France in 2014. Later on, the number was decreased to only 36 with a reported increase in the cost up to [three times](#). Like many other defence deals, the Rafale deal has also been referred to as a corruption scandal of the Prime Minister Modi's lead BJP government. Besides such controversies, India's obsession with the Rafale is quite visible from the statements of India's political and military top brass. For instance, in an event after the Pulwama-Balakot crisis, [Mr. Modi](#) asserted that if India had Rafales at that time, the results would have been different. Likewise, [Air Chief Marshal \(R\) BS Dhanoa](#), the then Air Chief of Indian Air Force (IAF), also came up with the same obsession. He held that if the IAF had Rafales in its inventory during the crisis, it must have shot down 4-5 Pakistani jets.

Rafale is believed to be one of the most advanced 4.5 generation jets equipped with Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar and semi-stealthy features. This makes it a nearly 5th generation fighter jet; on paper, it would likely provide IAF an edge over its regional counterparts. Furthermore, a combination of advanced and lethal weapons can be integrated

with this jet that has enhanced its strike range. Here, without going into technical specifications, like for instance, it can carry air-to-air ramjet missiles, air-to-ground precision-guided missiles along with laser-guided bombs and unguided bombs capable of delivering different warheads within a range of 100 to 600 kilometers. The diversity of missiles having different roles and target ranges would enable Indian Rafales to carry beyond visual range (BVR) deep strikes inside both of its bordering countries i.e. Pakistan and China. In the South Asian context, it is considered to be slightly superior to the fighter jets currently available in PAF's inventory. Along with all other advanced strike capabilities, most significantly, Rafale is also capable of delivering nuclear warheads. This would likely further enhance the deterrent value of India's air-based nuclear capabilities, previously, mostly fulfilled by the Russian origin Su-30 MKIs. It is also speculated that India might integrate its [BrahMos](#) supersonic nuclear-capable cruise missile with the Rafale fighter jet. This would likely create a security dilemma for Pakistan. Once operationalized, it would further compel Pakistan to counter the threat while staying within its existing posture of credible nuclear deterrence.

In this regard, Pakistan's air-based nuclear deterrence approach would be significant to analyze. Earlier this year on February 17, 2020, Pakistan successfully tested its [Ra'ad-II](#) air-launched cruise missile. The nuclear-capable missile has a reported range of 600 kilometers. It has further added up to the standoff capability of Pakistan air-based nuclear deterrence. The Ra'ad-II, an advanced version of the Ra'ad-I cruise missile is a stealth missile-like India's BrahMos cruise missile and has a pinpoint accuracy based on its guidance and navigation system. Similarly, it is also believed to be a terrain hugging and a highly maneuverable delivery system. Currently, the missile was fired from the PAF's Mirage-III aircraft. However, as per the estimates, the Ra'ad-II would be eventually integrated with the JF-17 thunder fighter jet of the PAF. Most probably, the JF-17B (the twin-seat variant), and the forthcoming AESA radar-equipped [Block-III](#) variant (a near equivalent to the Rafale jet) would likely be considered in this regard. This would further complement the existing standoff capability of the JF-17 with a better strike role.

While the South Asian region remains one of the most volatile regions in the world, India's induction of the Rafale fighter jet would further intensify the arms race in South Asia. At the time, when the security environment in the region has already been under stress especially after the Pulwama-Balakot crisis between India and Pakistan and the Ladakh-Galwan crisis between India and China, India's acquisition of Rafale is significant. Regardless of the humiliation which India had faced during these crises, it indicates that India aspires to dominate the escalation ladder with its military prowess. Despite this notion, the fact remains that Pakistan has proved its appropriate resort to retaliate during the recent crisis. The presence of nuclear-capable Rafale in IAF inventory would provide a qualitative edge to India which would further complicate the dynamics of escalation in South Asia. No doubt, Pakistan's JF-17 Block-III with its deep strike capability seems to be almost at par with India's much-hyped Rafale.

However, the requirement of a next-generation fighter jet for Pakistan, either indigenously or foreign acquired needs not to be ruled out completely.

[http://southasiajournal.net/justifying-pakistans-air-based-nuclear-deterrent-posture-vis-a-vis-indias-rafale-obsession /](http://southasiajournal.net/justifying-pakistans-air-based-nuclear-deterrent-posture-vis-a-vis-indias-rafale-obsession/)

India's Militarization of Outer Space: Implications for Pakistan

Sher Bano

India has a long-held desire to be recognized as one of the greatest military powers at the global level. In pursuit of this objective, over the last few years, India has been carrying out a very extensive military modernization program. Along with all the other components of its ongoing military modernization, maintaining a military presence in outer space has been the key focus of the Indian strategic elite. India's space militarization primarily comprises of indigenously developed satellites such as [GSAT-6](#) and [GSAT-7](#) (Geostationary Satellites), and [RISAT-2BR1](#) (Radar Imaging Satellite). India has also acquired [ASAT \(Anti-satellite weapon\)](#) capability after a successful test in early 2019. India's space-based ISR satellites would enhance its counterforce capabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan. Likewise, this would provide India's Command and Control centers with quantifiable and discernable data. These acquired space capabilities would further embolden India's NC2 (Nuclear Command and Control) with more liberty to take decisions. Such a security dilemma would annihilate the South Asian nuclear deterrence equation by providing India with an incentive to launch a counterforce pre-emptive strike against Pakistan.

In [March 2019](#), India had successfully tested an anti-satellite weapon by destroying one of its own satellites in outer space. By doing so, India has become the fourth country in the world after the US, Russia, and China that possess the ASAT capability. Similarly, with this capability, the likelihood of India's space weaponization is more evident as India would be in a strong position to kinetically destroy any incoming satellite. This would be a significant military advantage, especially in a crisis, as India would be in a position to use its ASAT capability to disturb the satellite communications and intelligence gathering of its opponent states. Along with this, India would be able to destroy the targets of its adversary's missiles. India has also enhanced the observation, reconnaissance, and surveillance capabilities of its GSAT series with 0.35m resolution, and RISAT/Cartosat series with 1-meter resolution. Moreover, India aspires to integrate its BMD systems (Ballistic Missile Defenses) with its satellites. This expected integration would further strengthen India's BMD as satellite networks in space would provide early information regarding the incoming missiles. In the same vein, India's overall BMD capabilities would also enhance with the incorporation of space-based detection along with the S-400 missile system.

India's enhanced space capabilities have further enhanced the security concerns of Pakistan. Since Pakistan does not aspire to militarize the space, there exists a visible qualitative gap between Pakistan's and India's space programs. To penetrate the space-based precision targeting capability of India, at the least Pakistan can use the high energy lasers. These lasers are ground-based ASAT weapons that can damage and disturb the other satellites with its

sensors. Furthermore, the MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle) capabilities of Pakistan can easily infiltrate India's enhanced Missile Defence shield integrated with satellites. Pakistan's premier space agency SUPARCO needs to further counter the emerging Indian space threat by developing indigenous observation and surveillance capability that could detect Indian space assets.

At the international level, Pakistan should further urge the international community to pressurize India against militarizing outer space. In this regard, PAROS (Proposed Prevention of an Arms Race in Space), though an agreement neglected by the international community needs to be agreed upon. Besides this, the previous multilateral agreements like the 1972 liability convention (Prevention of damage by space objects), 1979 Moon Agreement (Prevention of activities on celestial bodies and moon), and others are needed to be further enforced. This would likely highlight the militarization of space by India as a threat to international security. Pakistan further needs to draw its red lines vis-a-vis space militarization to deter India from any adventurous intrusion.

The space-based ISR capability has provided India a technical advantage to carry out a counterforce pre-emptive strike against Pakistan. The technical abilities provided by space-based ISR when fused provide an ability called F2T2EA (Fix, Find, Track, Target, Engage, Assess). This would give discernable data along with the exact target to attack. To counter such a pre-emptive strike by India, Pakistan must focus on the enhancement of its assured second-strike capability. Furthermore, Pakistan needs to further enhance the research and development of space-based ISR capability to retain the strategic balance in South Asia.

Hence, India's aspiration of an extensive military presence in the space has further threatened Pakistan. India's space militarization would ultimately lead to space weaponization. India seems to be least concerned about its prospective outcomes, for instance, it might provoke an unnecessary arms race in this domain at the regional level. This would further disturb the already fragile strategic balance in the South Asian region. Pakistan needs to carefully assess the emerging Indian space capabilities and take measures to enhance its security. The tall prospect of the development of an anti-satellite system by Pakistan seems to be an unfeasible option at least for the time being given the country's economic difficulties. As a short term strategy, Pakistan can use low-cost disruptive technologies, for instance, jamming, laser attacks, and cyber-attacks, etc. Nevertheless, against the backdrop Indian eagerness to militarize the space, the development of an enhanced space capability by Pakistan cannot be ruled out.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/29082020-indias-militarization-of-outer-space-implications-for-pakistan-oped/>

India's Quest to Dominate South Asian Cyberspace: Challenges for Pakistan

Basma Khalil

Since the advent of technological innovations in warfare, 'Cyberspace' has considerably emerged as the new battlefield for states. The South Asian region has also been impacted by this complex warfare domain. This is primarily because India aspires to dominate the regional domain of cyberspace. India has a history of cyber-attacks against Pakistan that involves malware attacks and spying operations. In recent years, there has been an intensification of India's cyber-attacks against Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan has been forced to enter this domain to preserve its cyberspace against Indian cyber-attacks. The prospects of a tit for tat approach towards cyber security might become considerably visible in South Asia. In the wake of India's offensive policies towards Pakistan in which, along with others, cyber security holds great significance.

India has kept its various cyber operations against Pakistan secret and suspicious since the public record in this regard is significantly not available. A recent assessment being carried out by [Netscout](#), a US-based company providing cyber security solutions and digital analytics is quite significant in this regard. As per the assessment; India has a larger cyber operations capability as compared to Pakistan. India has carried out various operations against Pakistan, which were referred to in the assessment. Whereas, Pakistan has not carried out as many cyber operations as India does. In South Asia, cyberspace has become an emerging warfare domain which India aspires to dominate. This equation would likely provoke Pakistan to enhance its cyber warfare capabilities to counter India's cyber threats.

The cyberspace operations of India also include 'cyber harassment' which involves; ransomware attacks, counterfeit pages to log in, spear phishing, website defacements, such as hacking of different official websites of Pakistan. In this regard, the official website of Pakistan's Ministry of [Foreign Affairs](#) was hacked in February 2019. Furthermore, the website of the public relations wing of the [Pakistan Navy](#) in October 2019 was also seized. Quite recently, on 12th August 2020, Pakistan's intelligence agencies have identified a [major cyber-attack](#), launched by Indian intelligence agencies. This is further evident from the timeline of previous cyber-attacks which India has carried out against Pakistan, for instance on commemoration anniversaries and national days of Pakistan.

Due to the rapid expansion of cyberspace at the regional level, cyber-attacks have become more lethal as these pose a serious threat to the national security of Pakistan. To cope up with such cyber threats posed by India, Pakistan needs to further enhance its cyber command capabilities. For reference, an Israel based cyber security firm NSO Group has

developed spyware namely 'Pegasus'. It has reportedly infected approximately [1400](#) senior government and military officials' gadgets in twenty countries including Pakistan. The attempt was aimed at gaining access to sensitive information stored on mobile phones of senior officials. Here, it would be significant to highlight that India and Israel have very recently signed a cyber-security cooperation [agreement](#) in July 2020 to exchange cyber technology. Such an expansion in Indian cyber capability and technology would pose a grievous threat to Pakistan's cyberspace. A Russian based anti-virus and digital security company [Kaspersky Lab](#) in one of its reports in 2019 has ranked Pakistan among the vulnerable countries concerning cyber-security. Another US-based firm [Symantec](#) had also claimed that Pakistan is among the most spied states, vulnerable to malware. These international reports indicate that India has been actively involved in cyber-attacks against Pakistan because there is no other regional rival of Pakistan.

More dependence on the internet has made states more vulnerable to cyber-attacks. It has become quite vibrant that India has carried out various cyber-attacks against Pakistan including fraudulent fabrications. The growing complexities of cyberspace and the acquisition of offensive cyber capabilities by India have threatened Pakistan's cyber security. Pakistan needs to be more conscious of the preparedness of a secure [cyber ecosystem](#). This would further enhance the security of communication networks being used for official as well as domestic purposes. Though relevant ministries and departments such as the Ministry of Information Technology and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority have considerably increased their capacity, fake IPs (Internet Protocol addresses) have been frequently used to target the networks in cyberspace. These activities can be damaging to the overall cyber security and have severe consequences. In the cyber-security domain, Pakistan needs to further invest in offensive cyber technologies that can paralyze any communication network working against the cyber interests of Pakistan. These offensive cyber technologies include the complex technologies that can disrupt and damage a system by using advanced techniques such as spear-phishing and denial of service attack. Furthermore, in the longer term, it would be more beneficial for Pakistan to entirely adopt the indigenously developed technology vis-à-vis its cyber security to ensure a safe and secure cyberspace. In this regard, Pakistan must further equip its specialized cyber workforce to cope up with the cyber threat posed by India. This would likely reduce the prospects of escalation dominance by India in the regional cyberspace. As India has already acquired offensive cyber weapons, certain boundaries are needed to be further integrated with the overall security calculus of national security.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/29082020-indias-quest-to-dominate-south-asian-cyberspace-challenges-for-pakistan-oped/>

From a Regional to a Global Player: Pakistan's Evolving Metamorphosis

Sadia Kazmi

The month of August holds special significance for the people of Pakistan. This is a month when Pakistan won its independence in 1947 and appeared on the world map as a sovereign state on 14th August. A young nation-state with a firm resolves to move forward in the face of all and any adversity. From losing its Eastern wing to becoming a responsible nuclear power, the country has had its fair share of highs and lows. Quite often the month of August comes enwrapped in the need to reflect, contemplate, and review how the country has been faring so far.

Indeed, it has come a long way from where it started 7 decades ago and continues to exhibit resilience. Today despite facing a myriad of challenges, it has been able to gradually evolve to offer a plethora of strategic opportunities not just to the regional states but to a much wider international canvas.

Other than some of the natural advantages by virtue of its geographical location, this owes in large part to the prudent initiatives that Pakistan's leadership has taken over the period of time, the most remarkable of which is the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative i.e. CPEC. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has essentially enhanced Pakistan's potentialities and is helping it metamorphosize into a global player from being a regional actor.

This claim has its roots in the fact that first and foremost CPEC is all about connectivity. It is a framework for regional connectivity. Although the nomenclature alludes to it being a bilateral project, which it sure is at the moment but eventually will be encompassing a cross-regional vector positively impacting several other states in South, West, and Central Asia as well as Europe and Africa.

These geographical linkages will be made possible through infrastructural development with improved roads, rail, and air transportation system, installing optical fiber cable, people to people contact, enhancing understanding through joint academic ventures, cultural and regional activities, promoting higher volume of trade, investment, and business opportunities through export-oriented Special Economic Zones, and ensuring and enhancing sustainable energy production.

So, by virtue of all this Pakistan has assumed a pivotal position across the regions with the potential for building well connected integrated regions of shared destiny, harmony, and development. However, for this to eventuate or materialize, the pre-requisite is to create a domestic environment conducive enough for the prospective investors and stakeholders. And

this is what Pakistani leadership is diligently working on and has managed to address a number of deficiencies such as generating employment opportunities for the local population, mitigating provincial grievances by launching developmental projects in all provinces of Pakistan, and hence propitiating to a large extent.

A quick snapshot of the progress so far reveals that all the projects are going as per schedule, within the agreed framework. With regard to the problem of unemployment, there are high hopes that overall 88 CPEC projects will widely benefit Pakistan by generating 2.3 million jobs by 2030. In the past 6 years, the CPEC has already created 75,000 jobs for Pakistanis. Even during the pandemic, nearly 47,000 workers reported having been working hard to ensure the continuity of various CPEC projects. Majority i.e. 83% of these workers i.e. 40,000 are Pakistani citizens, working in the capacity of labourers, engineers, and technicians. Only 7,000 are Chinese labourers which make 18 % of the total CPEC workforce. The local businesses are also benefitting by providing raw materials and serving as transporters in the ongoing projects.

Similarly, the 19 fully completed projects out of a total 88, points to the steady progress. Around 28 projects are under implementation which focuses on enhancing the energy generation capacity of the country. This includes the construction of wind, solar, and hydropower plant along with the setting up of export-oriented Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and another 41 projects have been planned. While 28 projects which are under implementation include projects like the wind power plant, solar power plant, hydropower project, and construction of special economic zones. These power plants are expected to ensure energy supply security adding 2.5% to the GDP. Gwadar is also on its way to practically becoming a hub of economic activity with the coal power plant issue having been resolved, 300 MW of electricity will add to the grid. 1.2-million-gallons daily water supply has also substantially addressed the water shortage issue. Gwadar airport is also under construction in Gwadar even during the ongoing pandemic.

Simultaneously, Pakistan has been focusing to improve the overall image by promoting the tourist industry as part of CPEC projects. only last year in December the country was ranked as the best international holiday destination for the year 2020, according to a New York based luxury and lifestyle travel magazine, Conde Nast Traveler. The same year British Backpackers Society also declared it the world's third most exciting adventure destination. So, it shows that this remarkable country is finally getting the focus it deserves for its exquisite landscapes, green plains, and towering mountains. Similarly, Maritime tourism is another buzz word that comes under the ambit of CPEC projects. And CPEC surely has enhanced the tourism scope by making travel shorter and easier.

This also points to the fact that the world acknowledges Pakistan's efforts towards improving the domestic security situation. This affluent amalgamation of tangible efforts on

one hand and portraying a soft and positive image of the country on the other hand is what makes Pakistan a success story today.

The world is keenly observing the CPEC unfolding in Pakistan and whether it is a traditional partner or not, they would like to benefit from the series of infrastructure projects. China is set to have the most reliable and cost-effective land-based corridor providing its direct access to the Indian Ocean and the world. Russia and the landlocked Central Asian states, keen on having access to warm waters, will find a great opportunity for trade and commerce in the broader Indian Ocean Region and ASEAN. In Africa, China is already actively involved in the infrastructural development projects, out of which four eastern corridor projects may conveniently be connected to the CPEC passing across the ocean into the Gwadar. EU is already China's major trading partner and CPEC may be used to conduct bilateral trade with reduced distance and cost. Hence, with all these previously uncharted trade routes fast becoming a reality, Pakistan will assume a status or irreplaceable transit route empowering it to leverage its crucial geostrategic position in pursuit of its national interests.

Hence, we can foresee a pattern where a number of civilizations – including Europeans, Russians, Turks, Arabs, Iranians, Chinese, and Africans – are in the process of coming together. This is being made possible through the BRI vision of global connectivity, manifested through CPEC. Once the CPEC materializes and gains worldwide attention, Pakistan would naturally gain prominence, providing the country with an opportunity for leadership responsibilities expanded into the Afro-Eurasian region. So, this whole project carries the real potential of transforming Pakistan from a regional to a global actor within the next decade.

However, obviously, all of this will not be seen by the ill-wishers i.e. the US and India positively. They have been employing all possible tools to hamper the progress. From alleged surgical strikes to imposing claims over Gilgit Baltistan, as well as resorting to proxies, all options are being explored with the sole aim of sabotaging the project, creating political domestic unrest, causing doubts about the intents, raise the economic and security cost of doing business by spiking fears about the route safety and intimidating the potential companies and investors. However, both China and Pakistan had already been quite vigilant and there is around 32,000 security personnel force consisting of Frontier Corps and police, and around 1.3 billion dollars have been allocated for the security of CPEC projects.

To sum it all, it is pertinent to infer that with the help of CPEC Pakistan has already embarked upon a journey towards economic regionalization in the globalized world, taking up a central stage in a multipolar world and is being driven by three main factors i.e. sustainable peace, development, and win-win model for regional actors and beyond.

<https://foreignpolicynews.org/2020/08/30/from-a-regional-to-a-global-player-pakistans-evolving-metamorphosis/>

Indo-US Enhanced Naval Cooperation: Implications for Pakistan

Irfan Ali

The convergences of Indo-US interests and common regional goals mainly since the last two decades have been the dominating factor for growing naval cooperation between both the countries. India seeks to expand its strategic influence over the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to achieve its long-held objective of becoming the regional power. As the US has emerged as dominant naval power since the end of World War II, this has further enhanced its naval role in the global arena. In pursuit of its objective, India considers that the US, through the military and technological support, could help it to achieve its desired objectives. Moreover, the US-China rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region has been intensified in recent years as evidence from the situation in the South China Sea. Such a conflict of interest with China has inspired the US to empower India as a balancer against China in the region. The enhanced naval cooperation of both the countries along with the nuclearization of the Indian Ocean by India would profound security implications for Pakistan.

The Indo-US naval partnership dates back to the year 1991 when both the countries formed the Indo-US '[Naval Steering Committee](#)'. In the same year, the navies of both countries started their first-ever naval exercises 'Malabar' intended to increase their naval cooperation. Later on, after many years, in 2014, when Prime Minister Modi led BJP government came into power in India, the Indian Ocean had emerged as a more strategically significant arena for India. This has been primarily aspired by India's aim of becoming a 'blue water' navy. At the same time, India perceives that the Chinese growing influence in the region can harm its interests. In 2015 the US and India signed an agreement "[US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region](#)" aimed at countering the Chinese influence in the region. The status of Major Defence Partner ([MDP](#)) was granted to India by the President Obama Administration in 2016. Subsequently, in 2016 both countries have signed the 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement' ([LEMOA](#)), an agreement for the exchange of logistic support and supplies.

Similarly, during the visit of Michael R. Pompeo (Secretary of State) and James N. Mattis (then Secretary of Defence) to India in 2018, "the Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement ([COMCASA](#))" was signed. The agreement is aimed at enhancing the interoperability between the militaries of two countries and the further sale of high tech defence equipment to India. In the same year 2018, India has also participated in the US-led Rim of the Pacific ([RIMPAC](#)) exercise conducted every two years in Hawaiian Island in the North Pacific Ocean. Also, the first-ever [tri-service](#) (ground, naval, and air forces) exercise 'Tiger Triumph' was

conducted between two countries in November 2019. The exercise was aimed at enhancing US-India relations in the Indo-Pacific region. Most recently in July 2020, Indian naval ships accompanied by the US Navy's world's largest aircraft carrier 'the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group' have conducted passage exercises ([PASSEX](#)) near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean. The joint exercises were intended to maximize training and interoperability as well as improving maritime cooperation between the two navies.

Other than being China Centric, the Indo-US enhanced naval cooperation holds severe security implications for Pakistan. It has further disturbed the balance of power between two regional foes India and Pakistan. Remarkably, considering the recent warmongering posture and threatening language by PM Modi towards Pakistan, like, for instance, while addressing a military gathering he asserted India could defeat Pakistan within [ten days](#). Such kind of belligerent rhetoric by PM Modi against Pakistan would pose a continuous fear of war and escalation in South Asia. The flagship CPEC project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China has significance in this regard as it would be directly linked with the Indian Ocean. Being the biggest stakeholder, China would likely have control and more influence over the sea route for trade which would pass through the Indian Ocean. Likewise, there are prospects that Pakistan might further provide China access to the Central Asian states through the CPEC and Gwadar Port. To contain China, the US has been empowering India while ignoring the fact that such empowerment could generate severe security implications for Pakistan.

Hence, the Indo-US enhanced naval partnership would provide India with a strategic advantage over Pakistan. Though the portrayal of their naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region seems to be more aimed at countering China, it would also empower India with an extensive naval presence in the IOR. The US' massive investment and the provision of hi-tech naval equipment for India would strengthen Indian naval power. While the hawkish behavior of PM Modi further indicates that India's enhanced naval power would further threaten Pakistan. For instance, on [November 4, 2016](#), after the Gwadar Port inauguration, an Indian nuclear submarine reportedly entered into Pakistan's maritime waters. Such negative signaling from India would likely impact the CPEC shipments. Pakistan needs to further indigenously expand its naval power to overcome the Indian naval threat. At the external level, Pakistan's naval cooperation with China is needed to be further enhanced. In this regard, the most recent acquisition of the first out of the four advanced "[Type-054 class frigate](#)" by Pakistan from China in August 2020 is way significant. This would further add to Pakistan's naval resort vis-à-vis India's enhanced naval capabilities.

<http://southasiajournal.net/indo-us-enhanced-naval-cooperation-implications-for-pakistan/>

Post-Galwan: The Indian Ocean is in the Focus

Ahyousha Khan

In more than 40 years, the worst border clash that has taken place between India-China, in the Galwan valley of the disputed Ladakh region resulted in the death of [20 Indian soldiers](#). Recent melees between the forces of both countries have occurred alongside the loosely demarcated line, the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In this region, both countries had fought a major war in 1962 that ended up with a humiliating defeat for India. LAC is an approximately [2,100 miles](#) long line that was established in the Himalayas in an uneasy truce after the 1962, war between China and India. Since then, India has been considering it as a de-facto border while China considers it as a disputed region and just a loose line.

It is generally agreed upon among security experts and scholars that these clashes were not some random border skirmishes between both countries. Rather various reasons can be put together for a better understanding of the situation. For instance, the geographical factors include; development of infrastructure in the disputed territory by India, consequently, China acquired a vantage point to monitor Indian movements. The political factor includes; India's unilateral annexation of the disputed region of Kashmir and its further division into two union territories Jammu and Kashmir and Laddakh. This provocative move by India has further [forced China into the Kashmir Crisis](#). Likewise, the difference of perspective on LAC between both countries and India's actions against Chinese interests; criticizing BRI, joining the Quad alliance, and blaming China for COVID-19 are also significant.

India has initially denied the claims of Chinese ingress. Prime Minister [Modi has denied](#) such news and reiterated that China has not made any intrusion across the LAC. This has raised serious questions about India's resolve to protect its claimed territory. Likewise, it has validated the Chinese stance of the situation. These policy blunders have exposed India's failure in intelligence gathering and its inability to conduct a strategic assessment regarding such a critical issue and then respond accordingly. Furthermore, the outcome of such a failure has further resulted in the breakdown of its much-hyped [deterrence](#) against China.

After the clash, de-escalation and disengagement have been observed from both sides regardless of the animosity and distrust. Moreover, Chinese troops have been maintaining a presence at their newly acquired positions; resultantly the border crisis has become an embarrassment and "new normal" for India. To overcome this frustration and embarrassment, at the economic front, India has boycotted [Chinese products and apps](#) along with a review of its engagement with China as a "developmental partner". Similarly, at the technological level, following the US approach, it has [disinvited Huawei](#) from national 5G trials. At the strategic

front, India is aligning itself with the US and the US alliance partners in the Indo-Pacific region. However, due to India's increased reliance on Chinese imports; automobile parts, microchips, and pharmaceuticals, an excessive boycott would not be possible for India. Given the economic interdependence between both the countries, this would be disastrous to India's economic interests.

To overcome this security dilemma along LAC, India has expedited the procurement of domestic and foreign advanced military equipment. These include the purchase and upgrade of advanced fighter aircrafts, an early deployment of new air defense systems (S-400) and procurement of Igla-S air defense systems from Russia, and Excalibur artillery rounds for M777 ultra-light howitzers from the US. Furthermore, India, under an emergency purchase, has requested Russia for the [immediate supply](#) of spare parts and specialized ammunition for its Russian-origin fighter jets, tanks, warships, and even submarines.

India's failure to deter China during the Ladakh-Galwan crisis would likely make it more apparent for India that it cannot deter or counter China even in the Indian Ocean. India considers the Indian Ocean as its backyard and aspires to maintain a strong military presence there. Based on this notion, there has been an intensification of Indo-US naval cooperation in recent years. So, when China, under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) started development projects in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri-Lanka, and Myanmar, these developments were perceived as threatening by the US and India. This has led to the development of the "[Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)" by the US in which China has been identified by the US as the major threat for Indo-US shared interests in the Indian Ocean Region. Furthermore, India has been deliberately given the role of the regional policeman under this strategy. In the same vein, the Galwan crisis has further put things in perspective for India, as before it was hard for India to leave its old policy of "non-alignment".

Now, India by seeking international alliances in the Indian Ocean seems to propagate that it has been assigned a new role. Recently, the Indian Navy conducted [joint naval exercises](#) with the US near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. During the exercise, the US Navy's nuclear powered Nimitz aircraft carrier participated. Previously, also in [2007](#), the Nimitz warship had docked near the Indian port of Chennai, but that was criticized by the environmentalists fearing nuclear radiation.

However, this time no such thing has happened, which reflects India's changing public opinion regarding its enhanced naval collaboration with the US. To further portray its enhanced role, India has also invited Australia for Malabar Naval Exercises along with the US and Japan. Moreover, quite recently in June 2020, India has also finalized the long-pending [Mutual Logistics Support Agreement](#) (MLSA) with Australia. This would involve the exchange of information between both countries aimed at expanding maritime security and safety. MLSA

would also facilitate the interoperability and help the military platforms to receive support and supply.

The recent border crisis has shown that India is not yet powerful enough to counter China solely on its capabilities. Surprisingly, the Galwan crisis depicts that India was not even prepared for such a strong defense that would let it fight alone with China. Some international scholars have declared this as “India’s restrain”, while others call it an “appeasement policy” to keep a room open for negotiation and de-escalation. Nonetheless, to avoid any such scenario in the future, it seems that India is in pursuit of alliances for its strong foothold vis-à-vis China in the Indian Ocean. Although, only time will tell the effectiveness of these alliances against China.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/31082020-post-galwan-the-indian-ocean-is-in-the-focus-oped/>