



INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND STRATEGIC STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA

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Executive Summary

SVI held an International Webinar on "Nuclear Deterrence and Strategic Stability in South Asia" on December 20, 2022, with hybrid participation at SVI Conference Room. The purpose of the webinar was to identify the underlying causes and implications of increasing great power competition. Moreover it was also our aim to study and highlight the drivers of crisis escalation, doctrinal shifts, nuclear deterrence and strategic stability in South Asia.

The early part of 21st century has turned out to be an extremely turbulent time for strategic stability at global level due to increasing great power competition, which is becoming a source of new alignments and realignments. India is one of the biggest beneficiaries of global power competition, due to its strategic partnership with major global powers. Resultantly these partnerships are increasing India's conventional and military strength. These developments have a significant impact on the international as well as South Asian peace and security situation.

In this backdrop the SVI organized an International Webinar as an outreach activity to connect with national and international audience. The webinar was divided into two sessions; the first session was on "Global Strategic Environment and Great Power Competition", and the second session was dedicated to "Crisis Escalation, Nuclear Deterrence and Doctrinal Shifts in South Asia".

For the purpose of promoting a better and informed debate, SVI invited some national discussants on its premises. Due to the different backgrounds of the speakers, diverse points of views

were presented; discussants remarks added more value to the debate.

Key Takeaways

1. Great power competition is not some temporary transformation in the relations between the major powers. It is a systemic paradigm shift that will last for the foreseeable future.
2. In recent years the great power competition is no longer bi-polar like in the Cold War era but rather multipolar, which is becoming the source of new alignments and realignments at global level.
3. Moreover, great power competition is also causing a lot of instability in regional relationships. Resultantly, we have a "hub and spoke deterrence cascade" at an international level where competition between US-Russia, China-US, China-India, India-Pakistan, and North Korea-US is setting off arms races of varying intensity in the different regions.
4. Global power competition has not just a military dimension but also has an economic dimension, including competition over bilateral trade and supply routes. The US and China are going through intense trade war and competition where so far no compromise has been achieved.
5. The main risk of escalation between the US and China is the Taiwan problem, because for China, it is an issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity.
6. China and India have a very pragmatic relationship. Modi's government is playing its cards well and India is

using current hostility between the US and China to its advantage. India sees this scenario as an opportunity.

7. The US considers India as a major military partner, major security partner and net security provider in the broader Asia-Pacific region.
8. In their rivalry against China, the US and its allies, are giving India access to increasingly sophisticated technologies. However, the chances are that these technologies will be used against Pakistan ultimately.
9. As far as Pakistan-US relations are concerned, these have always been transactional in nature for both sides. Since the end of the Cold War the US has moved away from Pakistan and chosen India as its strategic partner in South Asia.
10. South Asia is a crisis-prone region. Despite Pakistan and India being responsible nuclear powers, the danger with the recurrence of crises is a risk of unintended and inadvertent escalation because leadership has to take decisions in uncertain situations.
11. Crisis is not a situation of pre-violence alone. It can be said that crisis would also play-out during conflict while violence is ongoing.
12. India's pursuit of BMD technology is based on "damage limitation strategy", initially coined by the US. BMD was designed to essentially achieve damage limitation in two ways; one was to target and destroy the enemy's strategic forces, generally known as a counter force. Secondly, the corresponding component of this strategy was to develop the capacity to intercept enemy missiles before they could reach their targets.

13. According to the estimates of the International Panel on Fissile Materials, the weapons-grade stock piles of India's unsafeguarded plutonium and HEU are almost equal to that of China. There is greater evidence to suggest that India will tap into this huge latent fissile material potential, especially unsafeguarded plutonium to build weapons.
14. The operational and declaratory nuclear doctrine of India may not be in sync. There is dissonance in Indian strategic enclave. The concepts that were propagated by India once it declared its policy were more to present it as a responsible nuclear weapon state at the international level. However, India's military is obsessed with the doctrinal developments for limited war fighting.
15. It would be of no utility if Pakistan declared a nuclear doctrine and, like its adversary, does not follow it because that will add further to ambiguities. Pakistan will maintain a full spectrum deterrence posture within the ambit of credible minimum deterrence.
16. To maintain strategic stability both states should respect each other's existence as they are sovereign states with large populations. Bilateral disputes between the two states can only be resolved through negotiations.

Introduction

SVI International Webinar on "Nuclear Deterrence and Strategic Stability in South Asia" was held on December 20, 2022, with hybrid participation at SVI Conference Room.

The webinar was divided into two sessions; the first session was on "Global Strategic Environment and Great Power Competition", and the second was dedicated to "Crisis Escalation, Nuclear Deterrence and Doctrinal Shifts in South Asia".

International speakers included Mr William Alberque (Director, IISS Berlin), Prof. Dr Guo Xue Tang (Director, IISPA, China) and Dr Ali Ahmed (Independent Security Analyst, India).

National Speakers were Amb. Zamir Akram (Advisor NCA), Dr Mansoor Ahmed (Independent Security Analyst), Dr Adil Sultan (Dean, FASS) and Dr Nasir Hafeez (Director, SVI).

To generate better and more informed debate, SVI invited a few local experts as national discussants, including Dr Salma Malik, Mr Malik Qasim Mustafa, Dr Nasir Mehmood, Mr Sameer Khan, Mr Sarmad Zia Khan and Mr Haris Bilal Malik. The presence of discussants allowed greater expert-level deliberation on topics under discussion before opening the session for questions.

Dr Naeem Salik (ED, SVI) gave the welcome and introductory remarks. In his introductory remarks, Dr Salik explained the impact of the evolving global strategic situation amid great power competition. He said in this age of globalisation, everything is interconnected, while explaining that he said strategic and economic consequences of the Ukraine-Russian conflict are being faced by the whole world. Moreover, in recent years the great

power competition is no longer bi-polar but rather multipolar. The US officially identified Russia & China as immediate and long-term threats in its recent National Security Strategy 2022. Thus, this great power rivalry is becoming the source of new alignments and realignments at a global level. While commenting on the precarious situation of strategic stability in South Asia, Dr Salik said that South Asia is a crisis-prone region. Despite Pakistan and India being responsible nuclear powers, the danger with the recurrence of crises is a risk of unintended and inadvertent escalation because leadership has to take critical decisions in uncertain situations.

1. First Session-Global Strategic Environment and Great Power Competition

1.1 Global Strategic Environment and Contemporary Power Competition-Impact and Implications

Mr William Alberque (Director, IISS Berlin) was the first speaker; his topic of deliberation was "Global Strategic Environment and Contemporary Power Competition-Impact and Implications". He started his remarks by outlining all global strategic issues. First, he discussed the simultaneous release of the US Nuclear Posture, National Security and Missile Defense Reviews. He said that the release of these documents is important in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Mr Alberque viewed the Russian-Ukrainian conflict through a western lens and called it a "horrific war" and a "grinding land war" against a non-nuclear weapon state, where nuclear threats are made regularly. While listing global strategic issues of 2022, he also mentioned the Brahmos missile incident between Pakistan and India.

Regarding China, Mr Albuquerque was of the view that the discovery of Chinese missile silos and successful mating of sub-launched ballistic missiles (J3SLBM) on Chinese submarines is viewed by the US and its allies as a threat. Moreover, the US-UK-Australia emerging partnership in the form of AUKUS deal will enable the building of nuclear-powered submarines and open other areas of cooperation in advanced and emerging technology for Australia. He further added that in "Indo-Pacific" the launch of QUAD, which includes an alliance between the US and India, is a deliberate effort by the US to pull India away from Russian influence. Mr Albuquerque believed that in light of these developments, one could assume that there is a busy return to great power competition, and these heightened tensions have caused a lot of instability in the last few years. Moreover, great power competition is also causing a lot of instability in regional relationships. He said that today in the Middle East, there are real chances of possible proliferation because Iran has exceeded from the agreed limits of enrichment in JCPOA, which is particularly considered a "red line" by the new government in Israel. So, Iran's potential proliferation will be taken as a hedge by the other Gulf States to build their nuclear weapons.

While commenting on the situation in East Asia, the speaker said that North Korea is increasing its strategic nuclear forces and enhancing its weapons capability in an unconstrained nuclear program. These developments have direct consequences for South Korea; resultantly, the US has lifted the limits on South Korea's missile production. Hence, now South Korea can build high-precision conventional missiles and ballistic missiles of any

range. Moreover, South Korea is the only non-nuclear weapon state with submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

He added that ongoing global power competition had brought back states' use of ballistic missiles as a regular feature of warfare. The ballistic missiles during Cold War were considered inaccurate to use on the battlefield successfully. However, now these weapons have enhanced precisions and have been used by states on the battlefield. Such as in Syria, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The use of ballistic missiles as very capable high-precision weapons by states is also a cause of missile proliferation. The use of ballistic and cruise missiles by nuclear weapon states will become the cause of "entanglements" between nuclear and conventional systems.

Moreover, regardless of what kind of warhead these missiles are armed with, these missile systems will have a strategic impact because of their ability to target nuclear command and control systems. Mr Alberque also talked about the weaponisation of outer space, initiated by the US and Russia (former Soviet Union). He said that today Russia and China are building co-orbital weapons, direct anti-satellite weapons, directed energy weapons and other strange and unique ASATs. At the same time both China and Russia are hypocritically asking other states to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. He added that India has also recently demonstrated direct ASAT capability. Thus, the situation has pushed United Nations (UN) into agreeing to an effort to limit the space race by formulating an open working group to discuss roles and behaviours to prevent incidents from escalating. He added that all nuclear states rely on outer-space satellite capabilities for early warning capabilities. It is important

to realise that we are not going through the Cold War, where the US and Soviet Union had predominance in outer-space, on high seas, on land and in the nuclear realm. Today China is also becoming a part of global competition, where it is not constrained by any arms control whatsoever; there is no self-imposed limit on the production of fissile material, and it is also modernising its strategic forces. So, today we have a "hub and spoke deterrence cascade" at an international system where competition between – US-Russia, China-US, China-India, India-Pakistan, and North Korea-US – is setting off a sort of sub-arms race in the different regions. He said that "hub and spoke deterrence" is a model where two nuclear states deter each other but resultantly are causing arms race around them.

Moreover, today we have revisionist and ethno-nationalist states threatening their neighbours. The amount of mistrust between states and leaders is all time-high at the international level. UNSC, whose primary role is to uphold peace and security in the world, is failing miserably. Today information through OSINT is available to citizens, which previously agents of the CIA and KGB could dream of having. It reflects today, states have pretty good information on the number of nuclear weapons every state possesses. These ISR technologies are enabling states to monitor the deployment of armies of other countries today. Although these modern technological developments and their access to the masses is incredible, such information and visibility threaten stability between states. States used to rely on the ability to hide some of their moves to deter the other side.

Mr Alberque also unfolded the debate around TPNW, non-nuclear weapon states and their views on the abandoning NPT.

According to Mr Alberque, such a situation would not be ideal because NPT has stopped the proliferation of nuclear weapons and is a success. He said such multilateral measures are important because bilateral arms control agreements are already fading away. The US and Russia are no closer to discussing the New Start treaty, which will end by law in 2026 with no chance of extension. He said that until the Russian-Ukrainian conflict goes on, there is no chance that dialogue or negotiations between the two states on New Start Treaty will successfully initiate. He also blamed Russia and China that both are not interested in any bilateral or trilateral arms control treaties.

In his conclusion Mr. Alberque asked if there is a pathway that could take us back from all this competition. In his answer he said, there is no a pathway that could take us back, unless a situation like Cuban Missile Crisis happens. He added that Russia and China are both pursuing very revisionist policies; moreover, with the rise of the ethno-nationalism world needs a shock to get us to the idea that we need arms control to have stability. Though he said that he hopes that the world never gets to the point of the Cuban Missile Crisis. But in this arms race the world will be a dark place and we will need help. So, he hopes that the UN working group on outer space could succeed, China can find a way to engage in arms control, and India can find a way to talk to Pakistan and try to find stability and peace.

1.2 Strategic Stability in the Asia Pacific– Risks of Escalation

The second speaker of the session was Professor. Guo Xue Tang (Director, Institute of International Strategy and Policy Analysis) his topic was "Strategic Stability in the Asia Pacific– Risks of Escalation". He said that the topic allows him to not only

deliberate on nuclear issues but also on strategic issues of Asia-Pacific for the next years to come. He agreed with the previous speaker that there are many risks of escalation in the next year in broader "Asia-Pacific" and narrower "Indo-Pacific" regions. The situation in the region is not very optimistic because of the plenty of issues, particularly between the US and China. Both states are the mainstream of great power competition, but competition is also increasing between regional actors such as China-India-Pakistan. He said that this competition has not just a military dimension but also an economic dimension, including competition over bilateral trade and supply routes. He said he sees the US-China conflict over Taiwan and India-China border dispute as causes of instability in the region in the coming years. He further added that the creation of Asian NATO by the US to counter China's military power in East Asia would also cause instability. He said the nuclear competition between China and the US would intensify over Taiwan and in South China Sea.

Today the competition and nuclear deterrence between China and the US is not bilateral but of multilateral and very complicated nature with many parties involved. While mentioning the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" by the US, Prof. Tang said from the Chinese perspective, it is a strategy to contain China with elements borrowed by the US from its Cold War strategy. Both countries are going through intense trade war and competition where so far no compromise has been achieved. Furthermore, to counter China, the US is trying to bring more Western powers into East Asia and the Asia Pacific, which means there will be more power competition in the region, especially at China's doorstep in Asia-Pacific.

Moreover, the US has very high expectations from India in its policy against China. The US wants to make India play a bigger and more vital role in counterbalancing China. It is also observed that in recent years all western allies of the US and Japan have developed very good relations with India. But the relationship between the West and China has taken a deep dive in the past year. However, even during such turbulent times visits by different world leaders to China, including the Australian Foreign Minister and German Chancellor, is a chance both sides must utilise to calm themselves and reflect what kind of international system they want to build. In any such negotiation where the future of East Asia is discussed, ASEAN states must be included along with major powers. However, Taiwan issue is the biggest hurdle in successful initiation of negotiation process for peace in Asia-Pacific.

The main risk of escalation between the US and China is the Taiwan problem, because for China, it is an issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Speaker said that no one wants peace in the region more than China, and for the peaceful solution of Taiwan, why does the US not support peaceful unification? He said that for China, the US presence in the Asia-Pacific is not the issue. China supports peaceful coexistence in the region. The tensions between both countries over Taiwan heightened, especially when the US Speaker of the House of Representatives visited Taiwan. On her visit, PLOA launched military exercises around Taiwan. Actions by both sides show the extent to which both sides will go and who will want to pay the cost. He said the US uses the Taiwan issue to put “strategic pressure” on China.

In such a scenario, China cannot accept the US demand to limit its nuclear program. Dr Tang lastly explained the China-India relationship. He said that it is widely narrated that the US is using India to counterbalance China, which is incorrect. Modi's government is not that gullible, but India is using current hostility between the US and China to its advantage. India sees this scenario as an opportunity to get more from the US.

However, India does not want to break its relations with China because they know that the US wants more from India, but the US cannot give more to India. In terms of foreign direct investment in India, the US and the west are incapable, but they can force foreign companies to move from China to India. Moreover, if we narrow the scope to South Asia, there are also risks of escalation in the region. More powers are involved with regional states, especially India, which gives it a sense that it has leverage against others in the region. A visible change is witnessed in the mentality of India's Foreign Ministry, which now projects India as a more assertive global power at the international level rather than a regional power with limited aims. The border dispute between China and India now cannot be resolved because of the US involvement in it, where it supports India's territorial claims instead of China's. These behaviours and choices by the US in Asia-Pacific enhance the escalation risks.

1.3 Great Power Competition: Policy Options for Pakistan

The third speaker of the session was Amb. Zamir Akram (Advisor, NCA). The topic of his presentation was "Great Power Competition: Policy Options for Pakistan". First, he shared his views on great power competition and said that this is not some

temporary transformation in the relations between the major powers. It is a systemic paradigm shift that will last for the foreseeable future. This situation of competition has emerged because of the attempts by the US to preserve the post-Cold War global domination that it has managed to exercise. US commitment to this policy has been there since the time of the first Bush administration to the present time. As clearly articulated in the National Security Strategy 2022 of the US. This preservation strategy clearly defines the US strategic objectives of outcompeting Russia and China. In this strategy, the US sees China as a long-term threat with the capability to attain the position of a dominant global power, which of course, is rejected by the Chinese at various forums. But, at the same time, China has made it clear that this is the time of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. So, China is not a rising power but a great power in its own right at this particular time. Similarly, Russia under President Putin has overseen the resurgence, where the west and the US have to treat it as equal power in the world. One of the key reasons for the Russian invasion of Ukraine is to underscore a point that it will not tolerate the expansion of NATO, which from the Russian perspective, undermines its security. So, while the US wants to preserve a unipolar US-dominated world, the Russians and Chinese seek to transition.

The US has reacted to these changes by enhancing and strengthening its strategic alliances in Europe through NATO and Asia-Pacific. Since the announcement of the US to pivot to Asia, new alliances in the region have been created, which include QUAD, AUKUS and additional bilateral strategic agreements with Asia-Pacific states. In this shift towards more focus on Asia-

Pacific, the US has encouraged its European partners to participate more in this region.

Amb. Akram said the implications for Pakistan of these global developments and great power competition are regional. The first implication is with regard to India, and the second is regarding Afghanistan. While explaining the India factor, he said that at the end of the Cold War and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US has been very keen on developing its relations with India, which they have reciprocated. Relations between both countries quickly increased, and both countries signed a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement, which was the key to a new partnership. This agreement is supplemented by defence partnerships, easing trade restrictions, military exercises, transfer of equipment and technologies and signing of 4 foundational strategic agreements. The US also declared India as a major military partner, major security partner and net security provider in the broader Asia-Pacific region. In return, this has helped India, in building military ties with the US, France and Japan to develop its own conventional and strategic capabilities, which will have far-reaching impact on the strategic stability of South Asia.

Amb. Zamir said that in the follow-up of the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, the waiver granted to India by NSG for nuclear trade had enhanced India's ability to increase its arsenal. If not by diverting imported fissile material, then at least by using its indigenous fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons. It is also believed that Indian origin developing a hydrogen bomb. If the writings of Indian scholars like Ashley Tellis are to be believed, India will also retest hydrogen bombs. The

speaker also mentioned India's nuclear capabilities, which include its nuclear triad, its missile systems with various ranges (short, medium and even ICBM), BMD systems, ASAT capabilities and its attempts to develop hypersonic capabilities. In terms of impact on Indian nuclear and strategic policy of, this growing cooperation in terms of the development of CSD, it will enable India to fight a limited war below the nuclear threshold. Pakistan responded to CSD with the development of the Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) approach to ensure deterrence at tactical, operational and strategic level. After CSD, India is now obsessed with counterforce or preemptive first-strike capabilities, which are highly dangerous for South Asian strategic stability because it increases the chances of nuclear confrontations. He said the important question that arises here is what we will do about this situation as a state. Amb. Akram added that in terms of our strategic choices, it is very clear that Pakistan should enhance its security and strategic ties with China. It would be very difficult in near future for Pakistan and the US to enter into any strategic relationship because there is no strategic anchor between the two countries. The China-Pakistan strategic partnership also highlights India's vulnerabilities on two fronts (on LAC with China and LoC with Pakistan). He said that Pakistan should build its linkages with Russia, Afghanistan and Central Asian states, which largely depends on the peace and stability in Afghanistan. There is a convergence of interests between Russia, Pakistan and China on the issue of peace and stability in Afghanistan. In conclusion, he said that possibility exists for Pakistan to improve its strategic partnership with China, and it has been made possible because of the great power competition to a very large extent.

2. Discussion Session

Afterwards, the discussants made their remarks. The first discussant Dr Nasir Mehmood (Assistant Professor, NDU) raised a point that for a long time, Pakistan and the US had strategic ties, which were beneficial for regional security because of the US's role as a balancer in the region. Recently, owing to the US's proximity with India, the US is not playing the role of balancer in the region. So, what can Pakistan do to build its ties with the US for regional peace and security? In his remarks, Amb. Zamir said that I would question whether the US had played a constructive role in the region. As far as Pakistan-US relations are concerned, they have always been very transactional from both sides. So, we had close relations when it suited us and did not have close relations when favourable conditions were non-existent. Since the end of the Cold War the US has moved and made its strategic choice that India suits them as a strategic partner in South Asia. This factor is not the hatred against Pakistan but the simple fact that India can act as a hedge against China. So, whenever the Americans have interceded, they have done so to stop India and Pakistan from nuclear war, not to address the underlying causes of conflict between the two states. He said that during Balakot/Pulwama crisis in 2019, the US national security advisor gave the green signal to India to carry out the strike. But, Pakistan's attempt to get international actors on board to stop the escalation was ignored by the international community, until Pakistan carried out the strikes and shot down Indian aircraft; only then Americans stepped in to end the confrontation.

The second discussant Mr Sameer Ali Khan (Senior Research Officer, CASS) highlighted the issue of "entanglement" between

India and Pakistan. He said the Brahmos missile incident happened; the point of concern here is that though some of the Indian scholars consider Brahmos as a conventionally armed missile, there is a vast literature that suggests it is a nuclear-capable missile. The same is valid for other Indian missiles, such as Prahar and Pralay. So, this ambiguity between two nuclear-armed states during a crisis is a serious issue. While addressing the universal applicability of norms related to ASAT weapons Mr. Sameer said that 4 states had demonstrated the capability of direct ASAT weapons as of today, if we develop the norms now, they will be more likely to be applied to states that don't have this capability. So, it would be like NPT 2.0 dealing with space weapons, where there will be certain haves and have-nots. Mr Sameer also commented on the issue of China producing more fissile material. He said there needs to be clarification on the issue because, as far as he knows, China is using their existing stocks and is not producing new fissile material.

Moreover, the notion that the NPT is a success story is the version that P5 would like to present to the world. As far as NNWS are concerned NPT cannot be justified as a success story because of the way issues of nuclear proliferation and peaceful nuclear cooperation are dealt with. Lastly, he said that the west, in its rivalry against China, is giving India access to increasingly sophisticated technologies. Thus the chances that these technologies will be used against Pakistan also increase.

Mr Malik Qasim Mustafa (Director ACDC, ISSI) was the next discussant, and he shared his views on the proliferation of new technologies to friendly states, like the US is providing technology to India, resultantly India is becoming a bully in the region. Mr.

Mustafa posed a question to Mr William Alberque: Is there a way that global strategic stability can be established like the one we had during the Cold War to control the fear of escalation? His second question for speaker was that as it was mentioned here that China is "unconstrained", I would like to highlight that there is no such international restriction on any state to not protect itself in accordance with its threat perception. Today when we look at American spending on military technologies and equipment, there is a huge difference between China and the US. Discussant further added that in his view, it is not possible that China would suddenly be able to come at par with the US.

Dr. Nasir Hafeez (Director Research, SVI) said that the speakers presented a very gloomy picture, where the arms race is going on, and there is no peace and stability. Thus, great powers must focus on arms control measures, which would pave the way for regional arms control measures, such as between China-India dyad and the Pakistan-India dyad. Dr Hafeez also questioned the possibility of the peaceful rise of China and other powers to grow collectively together. He added that in his view, this competition and "zero-sum" mentality is due to the existence of a "realist paradigm". The discussant posed a question to Prof. Guo Xue Tang about why China wants the US to not involve other states in the Indo-Pacific.

Afterwards, Mr William Alberque answered the questions posed by the discussants. On the issue of China's peaceful rise, China's nuclear material and a lack of constraint he said that other P5 states US, Russia, France, and the UK have declared that they will no longer make weapons-usable fissile material. The US and Russia both have warhead caps, and France has self-constrained

its warhead total. The UK recently raised its ceiling but still has a very low total. However, China has no limit on its plutonium or HEU production. They are now building a very large civil plutonium fuel cycle because of their civil-military Fusion concept, which will allow them whenever they choose to build up on warheads massively and very quickly. According to estimates by Frank Von Hippel and Henry Sokolski, there could be 100 warheads built within a couple of years. The idea that China wants the US and Russia to lower their nuclear arsenals has long gone because of the production rate of China's ICBM, SLBM, heavy bombers and number of missile silos. These developments reflect that China wants to be a world-class nuclear power by 2030.

Moreover, Chinese and Russian stance on the outer space arms race are changing. The treaty draft they both presented on outer space comes from the 90s and 2000s vision of the world and does not fit in with the current developments pursued by both states. He said he agrees that the deterrence equation between global powers affects the regional powers. Still, Russia, due to its revisionist policies, and China, due to its nationalistic policies and wolf diplomacy, are not interested in arms control. Mr Albuquerque also addressed the question of the US proliferating technology to friendly states. He said that the US did that, but so did Russia and China. He added that Russian missile proliferation to South Korea under the "Brown Bear" missile proliferation program helped South Korea develop its missile.¹

¹ Jung Sung-ki, "Seoul Seeks to Get Moscow's Arms Technology," *The Korean Times*, 09 February, 2002,
http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/06/113_60599.html

Today, when the US sees China, it realises that it cannot compete it, without the help of its allies. Mr Alberque said that he is glad that the Pakistan and China have good relations, but when you look at the countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia, they all have a very different view of China's rise. They consider Chinese threats as very real; development in the South China Sea as incredibly destabilising.

Prof. Dr Tang expressed the Chinese perspective and said that China has been rising peacefully for more than 40 years. The problem in this equation is not China's peaceful rise but how other states react to it or how they can follow the Chinese example. He agreed that due to the conflictual nature of international relations, the possibility of the peaceful rise of every state is impossible. The US behaviour towards China reflects its utilisation of the Cold War means, where it relied heavily on its allies to contain the former USSR. Today, the US is using India as a counterbalance in the region against China.

Moreover, the US is making ASEAN countries choose between China and itself. He said he does not see that ASEAN countries or even India wanting to be truly involved in the US-Chinese conflict or competition. He said that ASEAN countries support US military presence in Asia-Pacific to counter Chinese military growth in the region. Still, at the same time, they do not want the US to hamper their economic and trade ties with China.

Dr Salma Malik (Assistant Professor DSS, QAU) as a discussant added that from Pakistan's perspective, it is important that we deliberate today on how this situation of competition among global powers will benefit Pakistan. She said today Pakistan's biggest issue is the economic crisis, where China's help is very generous. So, now it comes to Pakistan that how it benefits from

that situation. She said as a state from a global south, Pakistan would not want to see the escalation between the US and China because it will have to bear the consequences. So, in the region, this China –India- U.S connection is creating many problems for Pakistan. Today, US support is empowering India to such a point that Pakistan is facing difficulty defending its legitimate interests. Thus, Pakistan would respond to secure itself and its interests in such a situation. She said the policy of selective engagement by the US would not help mitigate the current global situation.

3. Second Session: Crisis Escalation, Nuclear Deterrence and Doctrinal Shifts in South Asia.

3.1 Crisis Escalation and Drivers of Instability

The first speaker of the second session was Dr Ali Ahmed (Independent Security Analyst, India) who shared his views on "Crisis Escalation and Drivers of Instability". He started by saying that the focus of his presentation would be the element of "stability" instead of instability. He said that crisis is not a situation of pre-violence alone. It can be said that crisis would also play out during conflict while violence is ongoing. Therefore, his presentation focused not so much on the nuclear aspect of crisis, but on crises that occur in other non-violent or pre-violence phases. The second point of his presentation was "the drivers of instability". He said that though there are drivers of instability but states should also remember that there are drivers of stability too, and they need to be reinforced, and we need to also factor-in, when we take into account the holistic picture. As a methodology Dr Ali Ahmed used "levels of war" and "levels of analysis" to see what kind of cycle develops. Before going into

details of his presentation, he said that his views entail a little bit of subjectivity.

He explained levels of war, sub-conventional, conventional and nuclear; he also showed a slide on levels of analyses, which included international, national, sub-national, regional, organisational and personality/individual. He said the complexity in this equation is at which level the crisis has been pitched. The actors at various levels of analyses will be forming and influencing the crisis, which will resultantly impact the crisis outcome. He went on and explained the drivers of instability at the international level. According to him, Ukraine War and Sino-US conflict act as drivers of instability at the international level. At the regional level, Dr Ahmed highlighted three drivers of instability from the Indian perspective, which were two-front war, Chinese factor and extremism. The next level explained by the speaker was "inter-state level", where drivers of instability were "Indo-Pakistan relations", the military balance between forces of both states and political dynamics. At the "national level" in India, economic downturn, political Hindutva and social polarisation were considered drivers of instability. At the "organisational level", Dr Ali Ahmed considered aggressive doctrines, the politicisation of issues at an organisational level and restructuring at military organisations as a sources of instability. At the "personality level", three personalities can influence the situation: political leadership, advisors and military leadership (Brass hats). These personalities and their actions determine how the national and organisational levels play out. Following on, the speaker merged the identified drivers of instability at levels of war and analysed the impacts of such a situation. First of all, while analysing international-level drivers of

instability with levels of war, he said that there is very little efficacy of international-level drivers to affect what happens at the sub-conventional/conventional level of conflict in South Asia. However, if India and Pakistan go up on the escalation ladder, then international concerns will be heightened, which speaker believed is good. At a regional level, South Asian nuclear rivals will be left to deal with each other. He said that there is exhaustion at the international level due to the periodic recurrences of crises at the regional level in South Asia. Hence, both countries will be left alone to fight it out at the conventional level of war until we start touching the nuclear threshold. At the inter-state level between India and Pakistan, what whole cycle of drivers of instability at different levels of war churn out is difficult to determine. At the National level, Hindutva is here to stay; therefore, at the lower levels of war India might wish to present a muscular image but as we go higher, it would like to disengage to dissipate crises. At an organisational level, we might expect a little bit more pushing and shoving, but there is recognition of the fact that nuclear level is not to be ventured into, which is valid for both states.

In his conclusion, he said that as states climb up the escalatory ladder along those levels of War, the cycle is mostly negative, the drivers of instability might become more cautious, they may decelerate, and the drivers of stability kick in. But that's the conundrum, when it is hunky-dory at the lower levels we indulge ourselves in crisis and during this constant struggle both states could move towards the upper levels. Therefore, the two states shouldn't really be complacent that nothing was going to happen at that level.

3.2 BMD and Emerging Technologies: Impact on Deterrence Stability

The second speaker of Session II, Dr Mansoor Ahmed (Independent Security Analyst) deliberated on "BMD and Emerging Technologies: Impact on Deterrence Stability". He said his focus today will not be the actual BMD developments in South Asia but rather their implications on deterrence stability vis-à-vis Pakistan. He said that it is well known fact that India has been pursuing a ballistic missile defence capability as part of its integrated air defence network since at least 1999 or 2000. It was in 2006-07 that India tested its first Prithvi Air defence system, which led to the development of the Prithvi defence vehicle. But its initial success at intercepting a moving target was achieved only in 2017, and then resultantly, India conducted an ASAT test in March 2019 at a distance of about 283 kilometres in which a moving target was destroyed in low Earth orbit. However, this test was conducted under controlled conditions and it was said that elements from India's emerging BMD architecture were deployed.

Only last month, India claimed to have conducted the first successful test of the AD-1 interceptors and this flight test was carried out with the participation of all BMD weapon system elements located at different geographical locations. The speaker also mentioned the Indian acquisition of the S-400 system from Russia. He said that the S-400 is a very potent surface-to-air missile air defence system but not a missile defence system because of the Earth's curvature coverage limitations, etc. Nevertheless, there have been five regiments that have been acquired by India. All of them are likely to be delivered by 2023.

India is also working on directed energy weapon technologies as part of its BMD Network. The speaker highlighted the statement by the former US Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, in 2012, in which he said there is a lot of scope for technological collaboration between the United States and India on defence technologies. So, it's important to understand the logic behind India's pursuit of this technology. Of course, technological determinism, bureaucratic politics, and organisational interests, especially of the DRDO. Secondly, there is this element of prestige, and third of course, because of perceived threats from China and Pakistan. Dr Mansoor added that we must understand that this is part of the "damage limitation strategy" coined by the United States, to reduce the vulnerability to Soviet nuclear forces. BMD was designed to essentially achieve damage limitation in two ways; one was to target and destroy the enemy's strategic forces on the ground and at sea, generally known as a counter force. Secondly, the corresponding component of this strategy was to develop the capacity to intercept enemy missiles before they could reach their targets.

So, damage limitation advocates in the west have argued that if deterrence fails, these capabilities will minimise the escalatory advantage of an adversary; the same applies in South Asia because India perceives a twin threat from China and Pakistan. But because missile defenses are yet to be developed and deployed to provide foolproof defence against strategic nuclear attacks, even for countries like the United States, another part of the damage limitation strategy is to pursue strategic counterforce capabilities. These capabilities will enable a state to achieve a decapitating first strike to neutralise the adversary's strategic nuclear forces and associated infrastructure. Today

India is developing a BMD shield and a sophisticated ISR satellite, and early warning network for target acquisition. India already has a vast network of military satellites, and its 4 foundational agreements with the United States will further augment its situational awareness.

Then there is the development of counterforce capabilities, which includes nuclear and conventional counterforce. All major nuclear powers are developing strategic conventional weapons or strategic non-nuclear weapons. There have been news reports that India is also raising a strategic rocket force on the pattern of the PLA rocket force, coupled with a triad of the supersonic Brahmos missiles. A hypersonic version of the Brahmos is also under development. At least some elements of the Brahmos triad are being integrated with the Sukhoi long-range aircraft under the Strategic Force Command (SFC), meaning they would have a dedicated nuclear role. Ranges of Brahmos are also being extended along with the Nirbhay subsonic system, capable of carrying a much heavier payload to ranges greater than 1000 kilometres. But Nirbhay is still in the research and development phase. In 2021 India conducted the first test of the Agni Prime ballistic missile it was again a cannisterized system, which can carry at least two MIRVs.

India is adding the Rampage air-to-ground missile with a range of 50 kilometres that it is acquiring from Israel to its Sukhoi air crafts. One of the reasons why India also acquired the Rafale was to enable it to launch a strategic counterforce and strategic strikes using air launched cruise missiles. In addition, it is very clear that India is planning to enhance its strategic nuclear arsenal and is in the process of adding to its nuclear submarine fleet. It has no choice but to add more warheads to meet the

requirements of its shifting doctrine. India has a huge latent nuclear potential; there is growing evidence to suggest that India will tap into this huge latent fissile material potential, especially unsafeguarded plutonium. It is very interesting if you look at the stockpile estimates of the International Panel on Fissile Materials, the weapons-grade stock pile of India's unsafeguarded plutonium and HEU is almost equal to that of China. At an international level, the debate on China adding to its warhead numbers is growing, the United States Department of Defense released a report on China's nuclear capabilities in which it is stated that eventually, China will add to its fissile materials stockpile though it has stopped producing fissile material or at least the weapons-grade materials many decades ago.

Dr Mansoor, discussed Indian fissile material production and its future implications in great detail. He said that India started work on its 500-megawatt prototype fast breeder reactor at least two decades ago. India already has plans to add at least five more breeder reactors as part of the three-stage nuclear energy program, which it had kept outside safeguards. It was clearly stated around 2008 when India-U.S civil nuclear deal was finalized that any facility outside of safeguards would be linked to India's strategic program. Currently, India is exponentially increasing its enrichment and reprocessing capacity. The logic behind these developments is that it requires reprocessed plutonium for the breeder program.

But interestingly, it has already separated huge amounts of approx. ten tons of plutonium, and it only takes about two tons of plutonium to fuel one breeder reactor. Once the breeders start working, they will produce more fissile material than they consume. About 140 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium per

year. Doctrinal transformation occurring in India is not a coincidence in this regard. The Chinese have been very careful, they of course do not recognise India as a nuclear weapon state. So, publicly they do not acknowledge the growing threat perception from the Indian program. But in future, the India factor will force Pakistan and China towards greater emphasis on survivability and dispersion possibly launch-on-warning status during a crisis.

He said that he would like to mention here that the decreasing conventional asymmetry given the two front war scenario will become an additional driver for India to rely more on its nuclear potential. So this will lead us to a situation where there will be arms race and crisis instability in the region. Dr. Mansoor said that the pursuit of damage limitation strategy at the current rate by India, specially its counter Force component, reduces mutual vulnerability, which is the basis of deterrence. Moreover, it increases the ability to fight and win a nuclear war in the eyes of an irrational decision maker. Unfortunately, from a Pakistani viewpoint, it is the kind of people you might find among India's top decision-makers.

In the final analysis, the speaker said that India's shift in its overall strategy is classic case of technology enthusiasm and the growing national power, which is giving it the flexibility to achieve its offensive goals. Moreover, this huge latent potential that is building up for more than 20 years now will become the driving force of a revisionist posturing that might undermine the status quo in the region in a future crisis.

3.3 Nuclear Deterrence-Doctrinal Ambiguities, Misconceptions and Dissonance

Dr Adil Sultan (Acting Dean, of FASS) was the third speaker of the second session. He deliberated on "Nuclear Deterrence-Doctrinal Ambiguities, Misconceptions and Dissonance". He said that he would be presenting a Pakistani perspective and would be talking about the ambiguities, misconceptions and dissonance and how these three things affect nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan. While addressing the details, Dr Adil said that India has a nuclear doctrine that was made public in January 2003, wherein India adopted the policy of credible minimum deterrence (CMD), and Pakistan also adheres to the same policy. But, India's rapid move towards building its triad, which includes the sea-based capabilities, multiplying its land-based delivery systems and the aerial platforms, makes it questionable whether its policy is to have a minimum deterrence. Moreover, if any capability is minimum against Pakistan, it cannot be credible against China because China is a much bigger country. If India is looking for credible capability against China, that cannot be minimum against Pakistan. This confusion is depicted in statements of scholars and decision-makers in India, where they face considerable difficulty in explaining credible minimum deterrence posture whether it's against Pakistan or China.

The second issue about Indian nuclear doctrine is that India declared no first use (NFU) posture by taking this morally high ground. However, the doctrine that was issued in 2003 had a caveat. NFU was conditional because it stated that India would retain the right to use a nuclear weapon against chemical or biological weapons attack. The world has witnessed the use of

chemical weapons in Syria, which means it would be difficult to determine whether there was a chemical attack. So, an aggressive state can use the situation as an excuse to build a justification for the use of nuclear weapons. Dr Adil also questioned India's commitment to NFU by highlighting the statements from India's former members of the nuclear command authority, former defense minister, current defense minister, India's former national security advisor and the commander of Indian strategic forces. All these officials publicly articulated that they do not believe in India's no first use posture. From the Pakistani perspective, these statements are considered important because these statements are not coming from individual scholars or some low-ranking officials but rather from senior public officials. Although India officially claimed that they continue to maintain no first use, but these statements on doctrinal position did create many ambiguities.

Moreover, the technological developments India is pursuing, like BMD systems, hypersonic glide vehicles, MIRVs that India tested recently and the ICBMs etc., can potentially give Indian decision-makers the option to launch a preemptive first strike. Dr Sultan also gave the example of a statement by Shiv Shankar Menon in which he said that "parts of India's nuclear doctrine had not been made public". This particular statement reflects that the operational and declaratory nuclear doctrine of India may not be in sync.

Another major ambiguity highlighted in Indian nuclear doctrine by the speaker was regarding the command and control of the Indian nuclear arsenal. In India's 2017 Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces, an organogram was released where strategic forces command was shown under the command of the

Chairman chiefs of staff committee, who is now the CDS. There is huge ambiguity on the command of nuclear arsenal on nuclear submarines as well. The whole world witnessed results of ambiguity in the command and control system when the Brahmos missile flew inside Pakistani territory allegedly due to the mistake of a Gp. Capt. level officer.

Regarding Pakistan's nuclear doctrine, Dr Adil Sultan said that although some scholars believe that doctrine or some publicly available document would make more sense, but he does not agree with it. He said that it would be of no utility if we declared a nuclear doctrine and, like our adversary, do not follow it because the consequence of such a situation are more ambiguities. The Speaker addressed a few more confusions regarding Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and policy. He said there is an ambiguity about whether Pakistan follows CMD or FSD. We must know that the full spectrum deterrence is not a quantitative term it is a qualitative response against the limited war fighting doctrine of India. Moreover, if the most recent statement by the NCA is analysed, it states that Pakistan will maintain a full spectrum deterrence posture within the ambit of credible minimum deterrence. Thus, credible minimum deterrence remains a policy, and full spectrum deterrence is a posture designed to convey a message that there is no space for any conflict between two nuclear weapon states.

Another ambiguity on the issue of FSD raised by many scholars is that Pakistan has developed short-range ballistic missiles, which are tactical nuclear weapons by design and to use them, they would be pre-delegated to local field commanders. Again this is a misconception because Pakistan is not the United States, and has been repeatedly stated that whether it's tactical or strategic

weapons, all nuclear weapons would be centrally commanded by the NCA, so there is no pre-delegation.

The most important misconception probably in India amongst India's decision-makers, since they have conventional superiority, is that they can wage limited conventional war under a nuclear environment. So, after Balakot 2019, the notion must have been dispelled. Still, since all militaries continue to develop options and probably there are not many lessons that the Indian decision makers have learnt. Hence, their ongoing efforts to find a space where they can claim that they are conventionally superior power in the region and can punish a nuclear state is damaging the stability in the region, and this misconception needs to be addressed.

Regarding Pakistan, the misconception that it has developed these short-range ballistic missiles because it probably wants to venture into nuclear war-fighting strategy needs to be corrected. If somebody understands the concept of full spectrum deterrence, its objective was to plug any perceived space for a limited military conflict. So the primary purpose of these weapons remains deterrence, it's not about nuclear war-fighting. Pakistan understands that any nuclear use would have a strategic impact and it would affect both countries. He said that this fact is well-acknowledged amongst the Pakistani decision-makers. Lastly, Dr Sultan addressed the element of dissonance. He believed that dissonance amongst India's strategic enclave is visible if we see the political leadership and the doctrinal development. The concepts that were articulated once India declared its policy were more to present India as a responsible nuclear weapon state at the international level. However, India's

military is obsessed with the doctrinal developments for limited war fighting without realising that both India and Pakistan are nuclear weapon states, any conventional conflict can quickly escalate to an all-out war with the possibility of nuclear use. The Indian military is mostly kept outside the decision-making loop. The political leadership by design, don't want to integrate the conventional military into this process. So the operators have been kept outside.

Dr Adil also shed light on the "DRDO Phenomena" in India's strategic enclave, where the scientists are developing ICBMs, short-range ballistic missiles and space weapons. All these developments that the scientific community is pursuing are different from India's declaratory policy or the doctrine. But, the scientific community just wants to project that India has a technological advantage or can compete with other major powers. So, the scientific community in India is moving on an entirely different trajectory. It's problematic because whatever they develop, it does affect Pakistan's security perception.

In conclusion, there needs to be clarity in India regarding its deterrence equation with China and Pakistan. If India wants to deal with China, they can continue doing that, but they have to eventually deal with Pakistan separately because the relationship for now is primarily between India and Pakistan. In future owing to its growth and potential, India might develop a kind of capability where it can stand up against China, but for now, it doesn't have that capability for the foreseeable future. This determines the dynamics of the dyad between India and Pakistan.

3.4 Strategic Stability in South Asia

The last speaker of the webinar was Dr Nasir Hafeez (Director Research, SVI). His topic of the presentation was "Strategic Stability in South Asia". He started his presentation on the premise that stability has been the focus of scholars working in the field of nuclear deterrence ever since the onset of the nuclear revolution. As we all know this term has a history and an evolution in the Cold War. Surely, South Asia can draw lessons from the Cold War experience but cannot emulate that. As South Asian situation is different due to long-standing Kashmir territorial dispute between India and Pakistan, the proximity of the two states, the conflicting identities and the history of use of force, make South Asia situation completely different. We have to be conscious of the fact that we are confronted with a rapidly changing and highly complex environment, which is shaping multi-layered reality across different dimensions and multiple perspectives interacting with such a reality in such a challenging time require complex tools.

So to explain the situation of strategic stability in South Asia, Dr Hafeez used the causal layer analysis, employing four layers of different perspectives. This analysis seeks to unravel the layers of popular thinking and to inquire deeper into its many levels, from systemic understanding to those of discourses and World Views and finally leading us to the myths and metaphors which are created by the culture at the level of the litany. It looks at the popular imagination often undifferentiated and monolithic, which often presents an impervious understanding of a contrary viewpoint. It is generally the public perception right at the top of the situation. Below this layer is the layer of systemic causes and

expert-level view of an issue's political, cultural, societal and historical factors along with some empirical evidence.

So, level two is based on data. The level of litany and the systemic cause narratives can be viewed as shallow empiricism and anecdotal exposition of the deeper world views. The world views legitimize the two layers of litany and systemic causation; the inclusion or exclusion of a particular discourse can eventually privilege the issue and the consequent scenarios that may emerge. It allows the inclusion of other perspectives or epistemologies. The level that follows worldview is that of unconscious and subconscious myths and metaphors. Myths create a sacrosanct image of the future, which structures and presupposes the perceptions and the world views and hence a person's experience of the world. This level is dependent on specific civilisational and cultural underpinning about the nature of time rationality and agency. Dr Hafeez presented a Pakistani perspective at all 4 levels. He highlighted dominant views in Pakistan, which at the level of the litany, it is assumed that within Pakistan there's a broader consensus that India is an enemy state and trying to undo Pakistan. Pakistan Army is considered the guardian of independence and national security. Pakistan will only be considered complete with the accession of Kashmir.

At a systemic level, it is recognised that there is a history of conflict and animosity between the two states. India reluctantly accepted the partition as a temporary arrangement and constantly pursued policies and strategies to undo it. India is illegally occupying Kashmir and it's in violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Pakistan should engage India based on sovereign equality without recognising Indian regional hegemony. It is believed that the strategic stability in the

region will be maintained at all costs. The full spectrum deterrence has successfully closed the doors of limited war below the nuclear threshold. Indo-US partnership to prepare India as a counterweight to China, is enhancing India's military capability against Pakistan. Dr Hafeez said that what drives this systemic level is our world views. So, at the world view level Pakistani discourse revolves around the perception that this nation is created as the guardian of Islam. Moreover, we are a victim of the international war of narratives.

At a metaphorical level, our perceptions are based on two factors: our superiority complex and our fear of dismemberment (based on our experience of 1971).

Dr Nasir also presented the Indian perspective based on a literature review that about is happening between India and Pakistan. At the litany level, the Indian perspective is that Kashmir is 'Attot Ang' and Muslims are foreigners, barbarians, converted Hindus and do not respect Hindu culture. India is only for Hindus. At the systemic level, India believes that it has the right to acquire a great power status, but it is facing two-front threat from China and Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan takes advantage of its nuclear weapons and has a revisionist agenda. But, India has the military capability to punish Pakistan, which it desperately tries to prove through the exploration of limited war options. Indian worldview is also based on two basic factors: its view of Brahmin supremacy and its fear of centuries of servitude. At a metaphorical level, Indian perception is that Pakistan is involved in the vivisection of mother India and wants to deliver death to India by a thousand cuts. In the third part of his presentation Dr Hafeez after the comparative analysis of Pakistani and Indian perspectives formulated the way forward for a stable South Asia. He said that

it is important that both states respect each other's existence as they are separate states with large populations. Bilateral disputes between the two states can only be resolved through negotiations. Muslims and Hindus are two separate identities which have a history of peaceful coexistence and harmony. Pakistan and Muslims are not an obstacle to Indian great power status, what matters for Pakistan is the resolution of the Kashmir issue and all other bilateral disputes. The nuclearisation of both countries has contributed positively to the region. But, notions like coercive options, limited war below the nuclear threshold and interference in internal affairs may lead to conflict escalation. However, stability in the region is in the mutual interest of both countries.

Afterwards, virtual audience posed questions to the speakers, including questions on AUKUS AND Chinese perspectives on it, how Pakistan should balance between major powers and the future of strategic balance in South Asia. Afterwards, all speakers were asked to share their final thoughts and ED, SVI ended the webinar with a vote of thanks.

Picture Gallery







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