



# **SVI Foresight**

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# **Strategic Vision Institute Islamabad**

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

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# Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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

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

## SVI Foresight

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

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## Editor's Note

SVI Foresight for the month of February touches upon some extremely significant issues. The issue contains a unique deliberation on a number of contemporary strategic and security issues with special relevance to Pakistan. With the wide range of national and international topics, the issue is an interesting read.

The issue discusses Pakistan's conventional military preparedness. The military has always been its guarantor of peace, along with vigilance, wide-range training, and preparedness. Thus, preparing the state for unforeseeable circumstances and crises that befall upon. Pakistan's tri-forces have conducted numerous exercises in various regions, nationally and internationally. This is the reason the Pakistan Air Force, much smaller in magnitude as compared to its Indian counterpart, was able to outmaneuver the rival courtesy of its tactical and technological brilliance on February 27th, 2019. The training, exercises, and use of advanced military hardware by the Pakistan military are discussed in the issue.

Since 1991, Kashmir Solidarity Day has been observed in Pakistan to uphold Kashmir's right to self-determination and call for an end to violence in the region. The efforts of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan's government in raising the voice for the people of Kashmir have been discussed in the issue.

The withdrawal of Moscow from the New START Treaty is in the limelight. The New START caps the number of deployed warheads for both countries, besides limiting the number of deployed and non-deployed delivery systems. Moreover, the treaty delineates the locations for basing deployed and non-deployed warheads and stipulates a comprehensive mechanism of notifications for the exchange of information about changes in respective arsenals, especially the on-site inspections for verifications. The SVI researchers shed light upon the impact on arms control after Russia's withdrawal from the treaty.

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

**Amber Afreen Abid**  
**Editor, SVI Foresight**

## ***Operation Swift Retort: A morning that redefined Indo-Pak conflict***

**Akash Shah**

The February 2019 standoff between India and Pakistan, particularly Pakistan's response to the Indian intrusion known as Operation Swift Retort, was unlike any other skirmish or war between the two countries. The technological element of the standoff played a major role in keeping the conflict localized and preventing it from escalating further. The previous stand-offs between India and Pakistan were marked by a shadow of WWII and cold war tactical and operational interplay, primarily because the military modernisation of both countries is not at par with that of the west.

However, in February 2019, Pakistan Air Force, much smaller in magnitude as compared to its Indian counterpart, was able to outmanoeuvre the rival courtesy of its tactical and technological brilliance. February 27th, 2019 has essentially disrupted the archaic notions of future Indo-Pakistan wars on the footing of 1965 or 1971 and has brought a touch of the 21st century to the conflict paradigm between two neighbours. Two technologies, Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles and Electronic Warfare were decisive for Pakistan Air Force to come out of Operation Swift Retort victorious and unscathed.

### **Beyond Visual Range Missiles**

One of the most significant developments in air warfare has been Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles. These missiles have a range

of over 100 kilometers and do not require fighter jets to enter the airspace of the enemy state. During the 1991 Gulf War, BVR missiles played a critical role in the success of the coalition's air campaign against Iraq. The United States Air Force used the AIM-7 Sparrow and AIM-120 AMRAAM missiles to great effect, shooting down multiple Iraqi aircraft from beyond visual range. The ability to engage targets at ranges beyond visual range allowed the coalition to engage and destroy Iraqi aircraft without putting their own pilots at risk. BVR missiles have become a significant part of the package that modern fighter jets carry during Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) and not having one could be fatal in the most literal sense.

The last time both Indian and Pakistani forces came face to face in an active conflict was in 1999 during the infamous Kargil adventure. While the Indian Air Force was pounding the positions of Pakistani troops who had crossed over the LoC, Pakistan Air Force was left blindfolded by the planners of the operation until much later when practically all other options, including the Stinger missiles, had run the course of their efficacy. And once it became part of the calculus, apart from other operational and geographical constraints that the PAF top brass had to deal with, the BVR missiles of Indian fighter jets further narrowed the workable operational deployment. However, that was 20 years ago. A lot has changed since and the Operation Swift Retort is a testimony of the transformation that has taken place during this time.

Pakistan's BVR capabilities played a vital role in keeping the skirmish localized and preventing it from escalating into a full-

blown war. One of the key factors that made Operation Swift Retort unique was the use of Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles. Pakistan's JF-17 Thunder and F-16 fighter jets were equipped with the Chinese-made SD-10 BVR and AIM-120 AMRAAM missiles respectively. Squadron Leader Hassan Siddiqui was able to lock on to an IAF Su-30MKI and fired an AIM-120C (AMRAAM) at the target. The missile was launched at a range where the Indian fighter aircraft did not have enough time to react and take evasive maneuvers.

The result was uncertainty regarding the fate of the Indian Su-30MKI aircraft, which could have been damaged or destroyed. After a short while, WG Cdr Abhinandan Varthaman of the Indian Air Force attempted to surprise the PAF fighters by flying low and switching off his Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) transponder. However, PAF's electronic warfare wizards were able to detect and track his aircraft through their advanced radar systems, providing the necessary target data to the F-16 pilot who launched a BVR AIM-120C missile, ultimately leading to the downing of Abhinandan's MiG-21.

### **Electronic warfare at its best**

Electronic warfare is another critical aspect of modern warfare that played an important role in the standoff. The use of electromagnetic weapons like jammers can disable high-tech enemy equipment or inhibit communication between enemies, bridging the numerical gap between the two sides. The effectiveness of electronic warfare in modern warfare has been demonstrated in several conflicts, including the Gulf War, where the US military used electronic warfare to disrupt Iraqi communication and radar systems, and

in the ongoing conflict in Syria, where Russia has deployed advanced electronic warfare capabilities to disrupt communication and navigation systems of its adversaries.

Electronic warfare played a crucial role in Pakistan Air Force's success during Operation Swift Retort, as evident from the details of the aerial encounter on 27th February 2019. Pakistan used electronic warfare to its advantage by jamming Indian communication systems and defuncting Indian high-tech equipment. The PAF had deployed their SAAB Erieye AEWCS aircraft and DA-20 Falcon equipped with electronic warfare capabilities to monitor and disrupt Indian Air Force's communication and radar systems.

A critical factor behind the fate that IAF WC Abhinandan had to suffer was the lack of communication between him and the IAF ground resources. The PAF's electronic warfare capabilities enabled them to disrupt Indian Air Force's ground control communication, as evident from the frantic warnings from Flt Lt Minty Agarwal to Abhinandan, urging him to "flow cold" to avoid getting hit. The PAF's ability to jam Indian Air Force's communication and radar systems gave them a significant advantage in aerial engagement.

The probability of conventional military hardware such as artillery and armor playing a crucial role in the future Indo-Pakistan conflict is very low, if not completely out of question, because of the nuclear overhang. The large-scale escalation was actively prevented by both sides during February 2019 crisis. Therefore, the focus has slanted heavily in favor of air warfare and its complementary aspects like BVR, air



defense, drone and electronic warfare. Hence, the successful execution of Operation Swift Retort has impacted the future of conflict in South Asia in more than one way, where ‘sophisticated, high-tech and smart’ military hardware will be preferred over overly expensive and bulky traditional equipment in the future.

<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/operation-swift-retort-a-morning-that-redefined-indo-pak-conflict/>

*Akash Shah (Research officer, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.)*

## ***Pakistan upholds Conventional Military Capabilities through Exercises***

***Amber Afreen Abid***

A country's prepared military has always been its guarantor of peace, along with vigilance, wide-range training, and preparedness. Thus preparing the state for unforeseeable circumstances and crisis that befalls upon. Pakistan's tri-forces have conducted numerous exercises in various regions, nationally and internationally. These exercises basically incorporate peace efforts and are not by any means a show of aggressive force posture. The peacetime exercises promote peace by preparing the state for encountering any kind of defensive acts and creating strong deterrence. History manifests that deterrence has always been a prime factor in the avoidance of wars and the establishment of peace. Hence, such exercises become a guarantor of peace in the volatile south Asian region.

Numerous exercises have been conducted by Pakistan which include AMAN-2023, held in the Arabian Sea. It is the eighth exercise conducted by Pakistan and participants from 50 countries. Moreover, A contingent of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) participated in Exercise "Spears of Victory 2023" which concluded at Air War Centre Dhahran (King Abdulaziz Air Base) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The existing global security scenario coupled with the evolving dynamics of air warfare calls for an enhanced partnership between Pakistan and friendly countries. International and regional strategic situation is undergoing profound changes with growing complexity in the security

environment and such exercises provide an opportunity to enhance interoperability in the face of shared challenges.

More than two decades have passed since the overt nuclearization of Pakistan and India, but the importance of conventional deterrence in the maintenance of strategic stability still can't be ruled out. India has always tried to exploit the threshold under the nuclear overhang and has always tried to disturb the strategic stability by introducing limited war doctrines and other offensive postures, and through major progression in the offensive military technology. India, in its endeavor to achieve regional hegemony, has always tried to get in the way of strategic stability in the south Asian region. The limited war in south Asia could potentially be the conflict escalator and could lead to a full-scale war, which could be disastrous for the two nuclear rivals. Hence, to let go of the chances of such consequences, stability and credible deterrence at the lower rung is imperative for peace and stability in the region.

Political planning and military preparedness is the key to the credible deterrence of a country. The purpose of deterrence is to delay the attainment of the objective of the adversary by elongating the war and making the war unthinkable for the opponent. Conventional deterrence thus precludes the adversary from any misadventure, under the nuclear overhang.

In the evolving security situation in South Asia, Pakistan is compelled to adopt a dual-track strategy for catering to the aggressive designs of the enemy at both conventional and unconventional levels. The Full-Spectrum deterrence posture of Pakistan has

been credible enough to deter the enemy at the unconventional level, but alongside that, Pakistan has to be fully prepared for any proactive war strategy or counterforce targeting by the enemy. In this regard, advanced training, exercises, and operational readiness are immensely important for the security of the country. It is the result of such comprehensive training, vigilance, and preparedness that Pakistan has successfully catered to India's aggressive actions in the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis. The apt retort and the befitting response is the indication of the country's military preparedness, which is further strengthened through conventional military exercises.

Hence, to conclude, all the Indian military modernization encompasses an apt response from Pakistan, and continuous military modernization and training in this regard helps attain strategic stability and deterrence

stability in the region. Mutual vulnerability prevails when the two adversaries are capable enough to deter each other's aggressive designs. A strong conventional deterrence ultimately creates anxiety and fear at the adversary's end that the war would be costlier and unachievable, and could result in a humiliating defeat. The conventional imbalance in south Asia is aptly controllable for Pakistan, and the incessant exercises of all the forces of Pakistan's military are tallying Pakistan's capability for countering any future threat matrix.

<https://strategic-times.com/blog/2023/02/26/pakistan-upholds-conventional-military-capabilities-through-exercises/>

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## ***Kashmir Under the Siege: From Erosion of State Autonomy to War Crimes***

***Zukhruf Amin***

Since 1991, Kashmir Solidarity Day has been observed in Pakistan to uphold Kashmir's right to self-determination and call for an end to violence in the region. The day serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle of the people of Kashmir and the need for peace and stability in the region.

The freedom struggle of Kashmiris refers to the decades-long conflict and human rights violations faced by the people of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Over the years, the struggle has been responded with India's excessive use of force; including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The situation has led to significant human suffering and has had a negative impact on the region's peace. Despite efforts to find a peaceful solution, the situation in IIOJK remains tense and the struggle of the Kashmiris continue.

The Indian government unilaterally revoked the region's special autonomous status and imposed a lockdown, including restrictions on communication, movement, and assembly. The siege was implemented to control protests and unrest, which had erupted after the decision to revoke autonomy. Since then, the situation in IIOJK has been deteriorating; by a heavy military presence, widespread human rights abuses, and restrictions on basic freedoms, including

the freedom of expression, and access to information. The siege has also disrupted the region's economy and caused widespread suffering, including difficulties in accessing healthcare, education, and other basic services. The inhumane treatment at the hands of the Indian security personnel has also led to increased tensions and violence, including clashes between security forces and innocent Kashmiris. The situation remains tense and continues to have a significant impact on the lives and rights of the people of Kashmir.

Human rights organizations have been highly critical of the Indian illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and the unprecedented violence that have taken place in the region. They have consistently raised alarm about the serious human rights situation in IIOJK. They have called for action to address the abuses and improve the situation for the local population. In 2019, Secretary General of Amnesty International [Kumi Naidoo](#) highlighted that "the actions of the Indian government have thrown ordinary people's lives into turmoil, subjecting them to unnecessary pain and distress on top of the years of human rights violations they have already endured. The people of Jammu and Kashmir should not be treated as pawns in a political crisis, and the international community must come together to call for their human rights to be respected." Various human rights organizations have documented numerous violations of civil and political rights, including restrictions on freedom of expression, arbitrary detentions, assembly, and extrajudicial killings.

According to [Human Right Watch Report 2023](#), the Indian authorities has intensified

the use of torture, and other forms of inhumane treatment by security forces in the region. [Amnesty International](#) have also documented instances use of force and human rights violation, including cases of torture and crimes against humanity as part of systematic targeting of civilians, in IIOJK e.g., the use of pellet guns, extra-judicial killings in staged cordon-and-search operations and illegal demographic changes in the Muslim majority region. It is pertinent to mention here that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under its [Article 7](#) states “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Moreover, Amnesty International recently reported instances of [demolition of homes](#) in Jammu and Kashmir. It condemned and raised concerns over the demolition cases calling them a gross human rights violation. [Article 25 of the Hague Regulations 1907](#) prohibits attacking buildings which are undefended and [Article 46](#) states that private property is to be respected and cannot be confiscated. These demolitions are also a clear violation of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which India is a [state party](#). Under the Covenant, forced evictions are prohibited.

Since these abuses constitute war crimes, they should be dealt with under the international humanitarian law. These organizations have repeatedly called for an independent and impartial investigation into these violations and has called the Indian government to act in accordance with international human rights law. They have also called on the Indian government to end the siege in Kashmir, lift restrictions on basic

freedoms, and hold those responsible for human rights abuses accountable. However, the Indian nationalist government has failed in addressing the human rights situation in IIOJK and providing justice and support for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris. Pakistan has been actively highlighting India’s human rights abuses in IIOJK and raising awareness about the issue both domestically and internationally. It has sought to draw attention to the human rights abuses taking place in the Muslim-majority region, including restrictions on basic human rights, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, as well as the use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment by Indian security personnel. Pakistan calls for an end to the siege in Kashmir, the lifting of restrictions on basic freedoms, independent investigation into human rights violations in the region, and the protection of the rights of the Kashmiris. Additionally, the Pakistani government has used its diplomatic channels to raise the issue with other countries in order to mobilize international support for the Kashmiri cause. Its efforts have contributed to increased attention to the situation in IIOJK for the sake of addressing the human rights abuses and protection of the rights of the Kashmiri people.

<https://strafasia.com/kashmir-under-the-siege-from-erosion-of-state-autonomy-to-war-crimes/>

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## ***India's Siege Warfare in Kashmir is a War Crime***

***Komal Khan***

The unilateral annexation of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019 is a violation of the principle of 'equal rights and self-determination' under article 1(2), Chapter 198 of the United Nations Charter. It secures the right to independence and autonomy of the people of Kashmir.

February 5 marks the Kashmir Solidarity day: solidarity in their right to self-determination and human rights. The Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir has seen a long history of conflict, with various human rights violations by the Indian security forces. The Indian government is responsible of using excessive force and violating the rights of Kashmiri civilians, including extrajudicial killings, mass detentions, and the use of torture. The situation in the region has been the subject of international concern and calls for investigations into the allegations of human rights abuses.

Human rights organizations have reported numerous violations of human rights in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Amnesty International has documented cases of excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, and restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Human Rights Watch has reported instances of torture, arbitrary arrests, and other abuses committed by Indian security forces in the region. The United Nations has also expressed concern over the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir, and called for impartial investigations into allegations of abuse.

According to United Nations Human Rights report on July 8, 2020, the use of pellet guns by the Indian forces as crowd-control punitive technique blinded 1,253 people in between mid-2016 to 2018.

This is a crime according to article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that prohibit subjection of people to 'torture, to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment'. It's important to note that the unlawful inflictions of terror, use of pellet guns and tear gas on civilians by the Indian troops in Kashmir have similar effects as war crimes, and therefore, need to be dealt as violation of the laws of war and war crimes by the international community.

Following the August 5 annexation of Kashmir, India denied humanitarian access to regional and international human rights agencies for relief assistance to the occupied and detained population of Kashmir. In a call to humanitarian access to the IIOJK, the spokesperson to the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated concern over the denial access in the disputed region by the Indian government to the human rights agencies affiliated with the United Nations.

The immediate curfew and siege had serious humanitarian consequences. The lockdown made the people of Kashmir suffer hunger and unavailability of basic commodities for survival. This is in violation to International Humanitarian Law and the article 54, additional protocol I, the Geneva Conventions. As clarified by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, that the state of starvation caused as a war tactic falls under the war crimes. The 4th Geneva Convention, in its article 59

provides for humanitarian access to the relief agencies by the occupying force in the occupied territory. Secondly, in accordance with the Customary International Humanitarian Law, the International Committee of the Red Cross in rule 56 obligates freedom of movement to humanitarian relief agents unless restricted by military necessity.

The politics of Hindutva in speech and practice is a violation of ethical standards and legal code of conduct set by the International Law, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, Humanitarian Law, and Human Rights Law. In the face of the war crimes being committed by the state of India

in the IIOJK, it is crucial for the international law agencies to conduct impartial and transparent investigations into these human rights violations and hold the nationalist government of India responsible to this account. This will help to address the human rights concerns of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and promote stability in the region.

<https://southasiajournal.net/indias-siege-warfare-in-kashmir-is-a-war-crime/>

*Komal Khan (Research officer, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.)*



## ***Russia's Suspension of New Start Treaty***

***Sher Bano***

President Putin in his speech before the Russian Parliament announces that Moscow will suspend the implementation of New START. The conditioning of the return to the implementation is not clear. President Putin cited Ukrainian attacks on Russian airbases and US interest in new Russian systems in the context of his aggressive behavior as grounds for suspension. Putin's decision to suspend Russian cooperation on the treaty's nuclear warheads and missile inspections follows Moscow's cancellation of talks late last year that were aimed at salvaging a deal that both sides blamed on the other of violating. The United States had previously walked away from the treaty; during the Trump administration, the US refused to enter into negotiations to extend it, accusing Moscow of flagrant violations. But when President Joe Biden took office in 2021, his administration signed a five-year extension. The suspension of the implementation of the New START means that not only will there be no BCC inspections and meetings, but also the exchange of information and notifications will end. However, suspension of the treaty is not the same as abandoning the treaty, there will be no Russian accumulation above the limits of the treaty. But there will be far fewer means to verify this (only national technical means), so compliance will be disputed.

New START, formally known as the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on measures for the further reduction and limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, was signed by the Obama administration in 2010 and entered into force

in February 2011 as a 10 year agreement. The treaty required both Russia and the US to commit to regular communications on the status of their nuclear arsenals, allow regular on-site inspections, and comply with limits on the number of deployed and undeployed warheads each would maintain. Those limits include: 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed nuclear bombers; 1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed bombers; 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and bombers. Hours after Putin's speech, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Russia would respect limits on nuclear weapons, even though Putin suspended participation in the pact. Russia will also continue to exchange information on ballistic missile test launches under previous agreements with the United States, the Foreign Ministry said. Since the US has not discontinued its participation, it can still send information and notifications to Russia. When Moscow suspended CFE's participation in 2007, the US kept sending information until 2011, but it is doubtful whether this would be the case now.

Since New START was signed, Russia and the US have allowed each other's compliance teams to conduct 328 on-site inspections of their reserves, and more importantly, the two nations have provided data exchanges and 25, 311 notifications about the status of their programs. Putin's announcement and the subsequent clarification from the Foreign Ministry seemed to indicate that the inspections are permanently suspended, but they did not make it clear whether data sharing and notifications will continue.



However, things would be cleared up long before March 1, 2023, the day both sides are supposed to exchange data on the total number of their nuclear forces. The United States and Russia have also been exchanging daily messages about movements and exercises, which has helped keep both nuclear powers clear about each other's actions. Notifications have been received every day. So if the information sharing stops, both sides would start to lose data so they can track exactly how many strategic weapons they have, and whether or not they're in the place they're supposed to be, and whether or not they're acting the way they're supposed to.

Inspections of US and Russian military sites under New START were paused by both sides in March 2020 due to the spread of the coronavirus. The US-Russia commission overseeing the treaty's implementation last met in October 2021, but then Russia unilaterally suspended its cooperation with the treaty's inspection provisions in August 2022 to protest US support for Ukraine. Both the US and Russia have cautiously planned their respective nuclear modernization programs based on the assumption that neither country will exceed the force levels currently dictated by New START. Without a deal after 2026, that assumption immediately goes away; both sides are likely to default to mutual mistrust amid fewer verifiable data points, which would result in the discourse being dominated by worst-case thinking about how both countries' arsenals would grow in the future.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/23022023-russias-suspension-of-new-start-treaty-oped/>

*Sher Bano (Research officer, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.)*

## ***Why Russia's suspension of participation in New START augurs badly for arms control?***

***Hamdan Khan***

On February 21st, President Putin while delivering his state of the nation address announced that “Russia is suspending its membership in the New START Treaty”. He went on to clarify that it was not a withdrawal but rather a suspension of participation. Interestingly, the treaty does not contain a provision about the parties (to the treaty) “suspending” their membership. Nevertheless, in article XIV the treaty recognizes the parties’ right to withdraw if they decide that “extraordinary events related to the subject matter” of the treaty have “jeopardized” their “supreme interests”. The withdrawing party would have to give notice containing “a statement of the extraordinary events”, which could jeopardize its supreme interests.

Signed in 2010, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) took effect in 2011 for a period of 10 years; in 2021, the treaty was extended for another 05 years. In article II, New START caps the number of deployed warheads for both countries besides limiting the number of deployed and non-deployed delivery systems. Moreover, the treaty delineates the locations for basing deployed and non-deployed warheads besides stipulating a comprehensive mechanism of notifications for the exchange of information about changes in respective arsenals and most importantly the on-site inspections for verifications.

## **What is behind Russia's suspension of its membership?**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted the Western capitals to rally around the sole agenda of disgruntling Russian objectives in Ukraine, which Moscow entwines with its existential security interests. Western sanctions against Russia and the unremitting supply of weapons to Ukraine — which empowered Kyiv to drastically roll back Russian advances — pushed the antagonism between Moscow and the West all times high since the end of the Cold War. As the zero-sum interplay thrived, the positive-sum arrangements, such as arms control, were predictably going to be a casualty and this is exactly what transpired.

In August 2022, Russia “temporarily” halted inspection activities citing the lopsided travel restrictions on its inspectors by Washington imposed in the wake of the war in Ukraine and “no obvious indication” of a decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in the US. Moscow, however, underscored its full commitment to the other provisions of the treaty and as per the US State Department, stepped up the notifications under the treaty. Later, the talks to resume inspections slated in November were postponed by Moscow accusing Washington of “toxicity and animosity”. In late January 2023, the US State Department spokesperson criticized Russia for refusing to allow inspections and cautioned that Russian actions threaten the “viability of US-Russia nuclear arms control”.

During his state of the nation address, Putin alleged that repeated requests by Russia to inspect US facilities have been turned down by Washington. He claimed that “the West is

directly involved in Ukraine's attempts to strike" Russian strategic aviation bases and alleged that drones used in the attacks were "equipped and updated" by NATO. The attacks reportedly occurred in December 2022 at Engels air base which houses Russian long-range strategic bombers. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) later alleged that the US undertook the attempts to "probe the protection" of Russian strategic facilities and that attacks on the facilities were launched by the US "military-technical and intelligence assistance". Putin also rejected that matters related to strategic weapon systems can be disassociated from the war in Ukraine and the Western avowals to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia. The Russian MFA claimed that the US policies aim to "undermine Russia's national security", which belies the principle of "indivisible security" enshrined in the preamble of the New START. It goes without saying that the antagonism intensified by the war in Ukraine had finally spilled over to strategic arms control.

### **What would change after Russia suspended its membership?**

Russia's MFA upheld that Moscow would "strictly comply" with "qualitative restrictions" for strategic arms set by the treaty until its annulment. It also affirmed that the exchange of notifications on ICBM and SLBM launches would continue as per the 1988 Soviet-U.S. agreement. If the parties choose to adhere to the two items, there are few chances of an immediate arms race imperiling strategic stability.

Nevertheless, provided the inspections had already been stopped, the notifications for "removal from accountability" and changes

in data concerning the strategic arms enshrined in articles VI and VII respectively would likely come to an end and so would the meetings of the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BSC). The developments would essentially mark an end to reciprocal transparency and mutual trust, which would have been crucial once the attempts to conclude a follow-on agreement to New START were to be made.

### **How the suspension would affect the future of arms control?**

New START was the last remaining arms control treaty between the US and Russia, which together account for nearly 90% of the world's nuclear weapons. Once the five-year extension of the treaty annuls in 2026 and given the cynicism around a follow-on agreement, it would be the first time since 1970 that there would be no limitations on the US and Russian strategic arsenals and delivery means. The non-existence of arms control between Washington and Moscow coupled with the obsolescence of some of the existing strategic systems and the emergence of new systems with strategic applications, a new and more intense strategic arms race would likely unfold.

On top of that, apart from the nuclear rivalry between the US and Russia, Washington — besides its threat perception of North Korea and that of its Pacific allies like South Korea and Japan — has recently been vociferously expressing concerns about what it claims is the large-scale modernization and expansion of the Chinese nuclear arsenal, which, as per the estimates by Pentagon, could have as many as 1000 warheads by 2030. Likewise, President Putin in his address alluded to the nuclear arsenals of Great Britain and France,

which are “directed against” Russia and form NATO's “combined offensive capabilities”. He did not miss adding the caveat that before talks on Russia restoring its membership of New START, Moscow “must have a clear idea” of the strategic capabilities of Great Britain and France.

Therefore, it is unlikely that either the US or Russia would agree to new arms control unless their other respective nuclear adversaries are also brought into the fold. And if China is to join arms control talks — which it has shown little interest till now — Beijing would unlikely overlook India’s growing strategic capabilities, which itself is vying to gain a strategic edge over its arch-rival Pakistan. Even if all the Nuclear Weapons States (NWSs) agree to participate

in arms control talks, not only the participation of more parties would render it difficult to reach a consensus, but also the inclusion of de facto nuclear powers in arms control talks would further add to the complications. Contrariwise, in the absence of arms control, the arms race between the USA and Russia would also channel down the nuclear chain to impact the force postures of all the NWSs.

<https://modern diplomacy.eu/2023/03/02/why-russias-suspension-of-participation-in-new-start-augurs-badly-for-arms-control/>

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