



SVI Foresight

**APRIL 2023
VOLUME 9, ISSUE 4**

**Edited by:
Amber Afreen Abid**

**Compilation & Design:
Ghulam Mujtaba Haider**

Strategic Vision Institute Islamabad

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI)

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SVI Foresight

SVI Foresight is a monthly electronic journal. It has a multi-disciplinary perspective highlighting contemporary strategic and security studies. The Journal is envisioned to be a collection of policy-oriented articles written by 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 April brings about a number of discussions on topics related to South Asia. It touches upon some extremely significant issues, including the current rapprochement in middle East, India's continuous oppressive and jingoistic behavior in Kashmir, impact of emerging technologies and the emerging global order and its impact.

It is about time that South Asian countries follow the lead and come out of the spiral which has been detrimental to regional connectivity, stability, and economic progress. As the rapprochement in the Middle East is indicative, no differences are big enough that could not be reconciled. However, the decision to hold the G-20 Summit in Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed territory recognized by the UN, is seen as an attempt to conceal the ongoing war crimes in the region by India. While Pakistan has been drawing attention to the human rights situation in the region, India is attempting to counter Pakistan's narrative on Jammu and Kashmir, projecting a sense of normalcy through the Summit. The Australian defence strategic review has been analyzed, which acknowledges that Australia can no longer rely on warning time for conflicts as it has in the past and that urgent action is needed to achieve higher levels of military preparedness and accelerated capability development. On the other hand, China being the trendsetter, has been pushing for de-dollarization in a number of ways in order to reduce its dependence on the US dollar and increase the use of its own currency. The order in Asia is critical to the overall stability of the world order. If there is instability, competition or conflict in Asia, it can have far-reaching consequences for the rest of the world.

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

Rapprochement wave in Arabian Peninsula: Lessons for South Asia?

Akash Shah

In what has been termed a Chinese diplomatic coup, the Saudi-Iran resumption of diplomatic ties, mediated by China, is arguably the biggest development for the region in the last decade. The first response, and rightly so, was that of skepticism that with the complexity of shared problems across the region, in practice it would be a hard shell to crack.

Since the Iranian revolution, the tremors of this Shia-Sunni state-level rivalry were perpetually felt in the Middle East and beyond. The antagonism had a direct bearing on the internal social cohesion and security situation of countries like Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and even to a certain extent in Pakistan as well. The question has been how would the two countries reconcile their differences that have been marred with blood on both sides. And even if they did, it is going to take a long time before the practical contours are agreed upon.

However, contrary to the calculated speculations, the first major breakthrough of this rapprochement was the end of the war in Yemen. Regardless of what side one supported during the active conflict, it was unanimously agreed that the war has brought on one of the worst humanitarian crises in

recent times. Apart from conflict entrepreneurs, everyone must be happy with this development.

Saudi-Syria Detente: Major Breakthrough In Yemen Conflict

Though the deal itself would have sufficed to have a substantial improvement in the security situation in the Middle East, another major development took place when the Syrian Foreign Minister touched down in Jeddah on April 12th. This is the first visit of a Syrian official to Saudi Arabia in over a decade.

When Arab Spring reached Syria and President Bashar Al Assad decided to use brute force to crush the peaceful protests, which later turned violent, it presented Riyadh with a unique opportunity to cut ties with Damascus, a close ally of Tehran. In fact, Saudi Arabia went a step further and actively supported rebel groups with logistics and funds to take down the Assad regime.

There was a time when Saudi Arabia was paying off for the mortars, RPGs, and bullets for the fall of Damascus. For instance, a Syrian rebel group Jaysh-al-Islam, which was believed to be heavily supported by Saudi Arabia, had managed to reach the outskirts of Damascus at one point during the civil war.

However, things have changed a lot since now the joint statement after the meeting between foreign ministers of the two countries stressed the need for the Syrian

government to take full control of all its territories and “end the presence of armed militias”. Such is the nature of realpolitik in contemporary times where the bitter memories of the past have to be brushed away as if they never happened, for the present to improve and the future to look drastically different and positive.

Bahrain’s resumption of ties with Qatar

Another, albeit comparatively less significant, development in the region is the announcement that Bahrain would lift trade and travel restrictions, resuming its ties with Qatar. Bahrain is the last of the four countries to do so as the rest of the states that imposed an embargo on Qatar – Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Egypt – had already lifted the blockade in January 2021.

It seems that the Arabs states have realized that they have a lot to gain from cooperation rather than holding grudges and animosity against each other. In the larger scheme of things, the diplomatic overtures have a global significance in the backdrop of the U.S-China strategic competition but that is a debate for another time.

The Middle East is always deemed as a region fraught with intra and inter-state rifts coupled with the interests of international players like the United States and China because of its oil resources and security situation. However, the pace at which the diplomatic efforts have manifested indicates

that regional leadership has come to the realization that peace is the prerequisite for stability and prosperity.

Lessons for South Asian Countries

It is not a revelation per se, but rather a reinvention of the wheel, that regional cooperation always stimulates economic progress and strengthening of ties by virtue of common interest for all the participating countries.

European Union since World War II and ASEAN countries in recent decades have been the perfect illustration of this idea. And interestingly all the countries in the aforementioned collaboration frameworks had and continue to have their differences but they have managed to settle them in the larger national interest.

It is about time that South Asian countries follow the lead and come out of the spiral which has been detrimental to regional connectivity, stability, and economic progress. As the rapprochement in the Middle East is indicative, no differences are big enough that could not be reconciled. Although SAARC would ideally be an excellent forum to initiate the process, the SCO platform with its broad focus and multilateral stakeholder participation could serve the purpose as well. All it takes is the will and sincerity of purpose.

<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/rapprochement-wave-in-arabian-peninsula-lessons-for-south-asia/>

India's legal & diplomatic liability for holding G-20 summit in IIOJK

Zukhruf Amin

The decision to hold the G-20 Summit in Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed territory recognized by the UN, is seen as an attempt to conceal the ongoing war crimes in the region by India. On April 11th, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its strong disapproval after India amended its G-20 schedule to include gatherings in Srinagar and Leh. Pakistan condemned India's actions as irresponsible and serving its illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions and international law.

In addition, Pakistan also denounced India's oppressive measures against the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), including attempts to alter the region's demographic composition. China has also opposed India's plan to hold the Summit in Jammu and Kashmir and urged the "parties concerned to avoid unilateral moves that may complicate the situation." Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian emphasized the need for "settling the Kashmir dispute through dialogue and

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

consultation to maintain regional peace and stability."

In August 2019, the Indian government unilaterally abolished Kashmir's special status; and divided it into two separate union territories – Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir; and Buddhist-dominated Ladakh. The move has eroded the autonomy of the region and has pushed it towards de facto recognition. For the first time since then, an international event is being hosted in the region. India's actions in the IIOJK have drawn widespread condemnation from human rights organizations. The Indian government's imposition of a communication blackout and curfew in the region has led to extensive human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and instances of torture.

Controversial Decision

Hosting the Summit in the disputed territory is seen as a smokescreen aimed at diverting global attention away from the underlying issue of war crimes being committed by the Indian security forces in the region. It is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Conventions. Article 32 of the Convention prohibits the use of torture against civilians in occupied territory. It states that "The High

Contracting Parties specifically agree that each of them is prohibited from taking any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands.

The prohibition applies not only to murder, torture, corporal punishment, mutilation and, medical or scientific experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of a protected person, but also to any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents.” Article 27 reads that “Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.”

The decision to hold a high-profile Summit in the IIOJK, known for its disputed status, has raised questions regarding New Delhi’s intentions and the ulterior motives behind the move. In tandem, the silence of the G-20 nations on the rampant human rights abuses in the region is a tragedy in itself. The lack of reaction from the international community to India’s selection of Kashmir and Ladakh as G-20 venues could be interpreted as a tacit approval of India’s decision, implying that the region is no longer considered as disputed.

India Hiding its War Crimes Via G-20 Summit

It is widely held that India is attempting to divert attention from the war crimes committed by its security forces in the region and present a façade of normalcy in the IIOJK through an investment conference and now hosting a G-20 Summit. It is believed that the Summit in Kashmir is a ploy to deceive the international community regarding the actual situation in the region. The potential participation of the G-20 nations in the Summit could undermine the credibility of the UNSC resolutions; advocating for the right of self-determination for the Kashmiris, and giving credence to the Indian claims while overlooking the human rights abuses in the region. So, before undertaking a potentially contentious path, it would be wise for the heads of G-20 states to exercise prudence.

The BJP government – fixated on Hindutva ideology, with Narendra Modi at the helm, appears determined in exploiting the G-20 Summit to advance its own geopolitical and domestic political objectives. This act is believed to be a move towards promoting the dangerous settler colonialism project, which entails the displacement of Kashmiris and the unlawful occupation of their land. The recent display of posters in Srinagar was to raise awareness among G-20 nations regarding India’s motives behind the Summit.

Pakistan expresses deep concern over India’s decision to host the G-20 meetings,

particularly the events centered on tourism in the IIOJK. From Pakistan's standpoint, this is a troubling development as it dilutes the UN's auspices and infringes on the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. While Pakistan has been drawing attention to the human rights situation in the region, India is attempting to counter Pakistan's narrative on Jammu and Kashmir, projecting a sense of normalcy through the Summit. However, this approach disregards the ongoing war crimes and fails to address the underlying issue of the internationally recognized Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/indias-legal-diplomatic-liability-for-holding-g-20-summit-in-iiojk/>

Zukhruf Amin (Research officer, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad).

Pulwama False Flag and Modi's Nuclear Brinkmanship to Win Elections

Hamdan Khan

The former governor of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) Satya Pal Malik has recently made headlines for his revelations about the Pulwama attack. While some of the claims by Malik on the Pulwama attack have previously been the talk of the town, in the recent interviews, particularly with Karan Thapar, he brought to the fore some previously unknown particulars thereby helping anatomize the intricate Pulwama puzzle.

According to Malik, several intelligence inputs warned of an attack — a claim corroborated by earlier media reportage. A yearlong investigation by Frontline magazine revealed that eleven intelligence warnings of a major attack were issued from January 2nd to February 13th, 2019. An intelligence tip dated February 13th — a day before the attack — is as specific as to alert of an attack “along the routes of security forces” and recommended security high alert. At least six intelligence inputs shared before February 13th identified Pulwama's Awantipura area (where the attack took place) as a high-risk zone.

Furthermore, as per Malik, not only the Home Ministry turned down the request for airplanes to airlift the soldiers, but also in contravention of the routine practice, an unusually large convoy of 2,500 CRPF

personnel was made to travel via Jammu-Srinagar Highway in 78 vehicles making it a sitting target for the prowling militants.

In addition, as per Malik, not only the route of the convoy was not duly sanitized for security threats, but also none of the 8-10 link roads meeting into the Highway within a stretch of 10 km in the Awantipura area was manned to stop any vehicles from joining the Highway as the large convoy voyaged. One of these link roads was used by Adil Ahmad Dar to ram his Mahindra Scorpio into the convoy killing 40 soldiers.

Even more strikingly, Malik revealed that the explosive-laden Mahindra Scorpio used in the attack kept roaming on the roads of Pulwama for about 10 days but was neither reported by the intelligence nor intercepted by the Indian forces. In the world's most militarized zone — Kashmir — not being able to intercept an SUV loaded with 300 kg of explosive material for about 10 days does not sound very plausible.

Furthermore, according to Frontline investigation, “actionable intelligence” was shared as early as January 24 that Mudasir Ahmad Khan — one of the alleged masterminds of the attack — and his fellow fighters are active in the Awantipura vicinity and are planning a big attack, but no effort was made to hunt them down. Interestingly, all these fighters were eliminated within a few weeks of the attack.

Given the precise nature and frequency of intelligence warnings, Indian authorities should have airlifted the soldiers or at the very least should have beefed up security along the route, but instead, soldiers were directed to the high-risk zone wherein the guard was lowered and voids were provided to the suicide bomber to join highway and strike the convoy. The systematic array of security gaps and lapses could not be categorized as mere “negligence” or coincidences. Rather it was the Chanakya-inspired Modi regime cunningly orchestrating events to facilitate the attack on the CRPF convoy.

Barely a month after the attack, former Governor of Mizoram Aziz Qureshi and Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav alleged that the Modi government perpetrated the Pulwama attack for electoral gains. Although, neither Qureshi nor Yadav furnished evidence to substantiate their claims, considering the Indian penchant for false flag operations for political gains, the possibility of the Modi regime being the orchestrator of the Pulwama attack cannot be overruled outright. In fact, from the standpoint of who benefitted from the Pulwama attack, the Modi regime and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged are the foremost victors.

In 2014, Modi won elections by craftily selling his Gujrat model of economic success. He promised “*ache din*” (Good times) by “minimum government, maximum

governance”. In addition, Modi vowed to transform the Indian economy and create new jobs for India’s ever-growing youth bulge.

However, going into the 2019 national elections, Modi had outrightly failed to deliver on his economic promises. A sequence of ill-conceived economic decisions, most notably demonetization and General Sales Tax (GST), inflicted heavy setbacks on the Indian economy. Not only Modi failed to significantly boost India’s economic growth, but also the promise of jobs to young Indians was never fulfilled. To make matters worse for Modi, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi was mounting an aggressive campaign employing the slogan “*Chowkidar Chor Ha*” (Watchman is a thief) for alleged embezzlements in the Rafale Jets deal.

Amidst the highly adverse electoral circumstances, the Modi government facilitated (possibly orchestrated) the Pulwama attack and promptly blamed it on Pakistan. As per Satya Pal Malik, Modi and NSA Ajit Doval silenced him when he informed them that the attack could have been averted had it not been for the security lapses. Malik adds that the subsequent public posturing by the Modi government made him realize that the onus was being shifted to Pakistan. Predictably, Modi and his aides were aiming to divert the focus of the election campaign from the governance and economic performance of their government to anti-Pakistan jingoism and Malik highlighting security lapses could have accorded more

credence to the suspicions about the Modi government being complicit in the attack.

Nevertheless, only stirring anti-Pakistan jingoism could not have won Modi elections until he communicates a muscular image of himself — a Prime Minister with the political will to retaliate to attacks blamed on Pakistan. The clever stratagem entailed massive electoral dividends and Modi did not even try to disguise his agenda to exploit Pulwama and its after-events for electoral gains. Later on, while addressing an election rally, Modi brazenly pleaded with the first-time voters to dedicate their vote to the “brave men who conducted Balakot airstrikes” and “to the CRPF men who lost their lives in the Pulwama attack”.

After Modi gave a free hand to the military, it took the Indian Air Force (IAF) 11 days and the requisite cloud cover to avoid Pakistani radars to stage a Modi-sought retaliation. During the wee hours of February 26th, 2019, IAF delivered Spice 2000 bombs inside mainland Pakistan — which, however, missed their targets by a few hundred meters. Pakistan responded the next day by bombing open spaces close to Indian military installations in IOJ&K. In the ensuing beyond-visual-range combat — in which Pakistan Air Force (PAF) established absolute air dominance — Pakistan claims to have shot down two Indian aircraft. One Indian MiG-21 was shot down over Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K), whose wreckage was recovered and the pilot was taken

captive. Amidst the “fog of war”, Indian air defenses downed one of their helicopter resulting in the killing of at least six military personnel.

While Indian military planners must have expected a Pakistani response, a helicopter caught in fratricide, the downing of MiG-21, and the capture of a pilot (whose videos in Pakistan’s captivity were circulated on social media) were the inadvertent and rather embarrassing consequences for the Modi regime, which incentivized Modi to further escalate. According to Reuters, India threatened to launch six missiles at targets inside Pakistan. Modi himself spilled beans regarding the missile attack bragging that had the captive pilot received even a scratch, India would have inflicted a “*Qatal ki raat*” (Night of Slaughter) on Pakistan. According to Mike Pompeo, he was informed by his Indian counterpart that New Delhi was weighing options for escalation. Reuters adds that Ajit Doval informed Pakistan’s spy chief during a phone call that India was prepared to escalate. Meanwhile, Pakistan resolved to respond with “three times over” missile strikes. Pakistan’s then Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi later confirmed the threat of an Indian missile attack and stated that the alertness of Pakistan Armed Forces foiled Indian designs.

Although the Reuters story claims that Indian missiles were armed with conventional warheads, Pakistan did not have a mechanism to verify the conventional nature of incoming missiles. Given Pakistan’s qualms about

India's nuclear doctrine and New Delhi's flirtation with preemptive counterforce strikes, Islamabad could have judged Indian missiles as the start of a preemptive attack and faced with a "use it or lose it" dilemma, could have responded by launching part of its nuclear arsenal.

There is no evidence to suggest that Pakistan's prepared response was anything except conventional strikes. However, India also did not have a mechanism to ascertain whether the retaliatory strike is conventional and could have judged Pakistan's missiles as armed with nuclear warheads and that might have been the start of a nuclear conflagration.

Furthermore, although no information about the choice of targets is available, had the conventional missile strikes inadvertently hit the strategic sites of any of the countries, "inadvertent escalation" was very much on the cards.

Despite having pushed India and Pakistan to the brink of a perilous missile exchange — just to win elections — Modi did not hold back. In a palpable case of nuclear posturing,

Indian Navy deployed its SSBN INS Arihant, which could not have come without the nod at the highest level of the Indian government. The chain of events that started with the Modi regime orchestrating elements to abet the Pulwama attack escalated to push the two countries to the brink of a nuclear conflagration.

Thanks to the stroke of luck and reported interventions by outside powers, Pakistan and India pulled back from the brink during the Pulwama crisis, but given Modi received immediate electoral dividends (BJP won a landslide victory in the 2019 polls) for his reckless nuclear brinkmanship and international cossetting of India during the crisis, he is unlikely to dissuade from resorting to such reckless behavior again. Provided national elections in India are only months away, Islamabad ought to be wary of its eastern neighbor with a penchant for nuclear brinkmanship for electoral gains.

Hamdan Khan (Research officer, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.)

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on South Asian Strategic Stability

Amber Afreen Abid

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines or computer programs to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and decision-making. There are several different types of AI, including rule-based systems, which follow a set of pre-defined rules to make decisions; machine learning, which involves training algorithms on large datasets to improve their performance over time; and deep learning, which uses neural networks to model complex patterns in data.

Artificial intelligence (AI) can potentially have both positive and negative impacts on regional strategic stability. On the positive side, AI helps in improved situational awareness, AI can help improve the ability of governments to monitor and analyze complex security situations and to identify potential threats and risks in a timely manner. Moreover, AI helps in enhanced decision-making, by helping decision-makers to process and analyze large amounts of data and to make more informed and effective decisions about military operations and other strategic issues. Furthermore, it supports in more efficient military operations, as AI can help automate certain tasks related to national defense, such as logistics, planning, and reconnaissance, which can free up human resources and improve the efficiency of military operations.

However, there are also potential negative impacts of AI on South Asian strategic

stability. One concern is that AI could potentially be used to develop more advanced and autonomous weapons systems in South Asia, which could increase the risk of accidental or intentional conflict. For example, AI could be used to develop unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that can operate autonomously, without human intervention, and make decisions about targets and weapons use based on data analysis and pattern recognition. The development of these types of weapons systems could potentially increase the speed and scale of military operations, which could make it more difficult for human decision-makers to control and manage the situation.

Moreover, there is the risk that autonomous weapons systems could malfunction or be hacked, leading to unintended consequences or conflicts. Additionally, there is the risk that AI could be used to develop more sophisticated cyber capabilities, which could be used to disrupt or disable critical infrastructure, such as power grids or communication networks.

The development of AI-enabled nuclear weapons systems could potentially increase the risk of nuclear escalation in the South Asian region. If AI systems are integrated into nuclear weapons systems, they could potentially reduce the time it takes to make a decision to use nuclear weapons, which could increase the risk of unintended or accidental nuclear use. Furthermore, the development of AI-enabled nuclear weapons systems could also potentially lead to an arms race among South Asian nations, as each country seeks to develop more advanced capabilities in order to maintain a strategic advantage. This could

increase tensions and potentially lead to a destabilizing arms race in the region.

To mitigate these risks, it will be important for policymakers to carefully consider the potential implications of AI-enabled weapons systems and to establish norms and regulations to ensure that they are used in a responsible and accountable manner. This could involve developing international agreements to limit the use of certain types of autonomous weapons systems, as well as investing in research and development to promote the responsible use of AI in military applications.

<https://strategic-times.com/blog/2023/04/29/impact-of-artificial-intelligence-on-south-asian-strategic-stability/>

*Amber Afreen Abid (Research officer,
Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.)*

Australia's Defence Strategic Review 2023

Sher Bano

Australia's federal government has released the Defence Strategic Review on April 24, 2023, which is part of a larger classified version that will guide Australian defense thinking for at least the rest of the decade. The review has been driven by both strategic and political imperatives, with the government needing to reprioritize the defense budget and address unfunded defense projects while also establishing its credentials as a reliable government for national security. The review acknowledges that Australia can no longer rely on warning time for conflicts as it has in the past and that urgent action is needed to achieve higher levels of military preparedness and accelerated capability development.

The report suggested that the government firstly needs to reallocate its defense budget due to unfunded defense projects left by the previous coalition government, which requires cutting funding. Adding to this challenge, the announcement of the AUKUS submarine plan in March 2023 means that the government must secure up to 360 billion AUD to fund its nuclear-powered submarine program. Secondly, the left-of-center Albanese Labor government wants to establish itself as a reliable government for national security, as conservative governments have traditionally been seen as stronger in this area in Australia. Thus, the

government hopes that the report will help shift citizens' sentiments on this matter.

Secondly, it highlights the need for urgent action as the current strategic situation requires higher levels of military preparedness and accelerated capability development. The review acknowledges that Australia can no longer rely on warning time as it has in the past. Furthermore, it suggests a departure from the typical approach to policy development, risk management, and Defence preparedness, which may require subsequent reviews, including one on the size of the naval fleet. However, the review's proposals may be hindered by the previous defense reviews' failure to bring about significant changes in the department. Additionally, the left-of-center government hopes that this review will help shift public sentiment on national security and establish itself as a reliable government for national security.

As far as deterrence is concerned, the review endorses deterrence by denial strategy. To accomplish this, Australia must develop a force capable of projecting power over longer distances against potential adversaries. Missiles are the preferred means to achieve this, while the USAF B21 bomber is specifically excluded. The review provides detailed guidance on the need for a new deterrence approach. However, the effectiveness of deterrence by denial hinges on a clear purpose, particularly regarding the target and the reasons behind it, as well as an

understanding of an adversary's risk calculation. Unfortunately, the review is missing information on who is being deterred, which is a significant oversight.

The Defence Strategic Review endorses investing in long- and medium-range missiles and advocates for the widespread deployment of autonomous systems, as well as advanced capabilities like nuclear-propelled submarines and collaboration on advanced technologies through AUKUS Pillar 2. The review also suggests establishing a new government program, the Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator (ASCA), to address an existing gap between the Department of Defence and Australian companies. This program will likely operate outside of the Department of Defence and receive government priorities, working with industry to develop innovative asymmetric capabilities.

The review reaffirms the focus on its immediate region in the north-eastern Indian Ocean, maritime Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, as previously stated in the Defence Strategic Update 2022. The ADF's efforts will concentrate on the eastern side of the Indian Ocean to avoid commitments in the western Indian Ocean. While the review mainly centers on Australia's capabilities rather than regional relationships, it proposes expanding Australia's Defence Cooperation Program in the Indian Ocean region, which may involve expanding the Pacific Maritime

Security Program, also known as the Pacific Patrol Boat Program.

The review proposes several significant changes to Australia's defence posture. It suggests moving away from the "Defence of Australia" strategy, which the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has employed for decades, to a focus on "National Defence." This will involve a comprehensive effort by the whole nation and government to improve resilience across all domains, including sea, air, land, cyber, and space. The review also advocates for a deterrence strategy through denial, which will prioritize anti-access/area denial capabilities such as long-range strike and undersea capabilities. Additionally, the alliance with the United States will remain central to Australia's security and strategy, and investing in other Indo-Pacific partnerships, including with India, is essential. The ADF will be transformed from a Balanced Force to a Focused or a Balanced Force, and Australia will develop indigenous long-range missile manufacturing. The review also notes that Australia's strategic posture is no longer based on a 10-year warning time, and instead, it identifies three periods: 2023-25 for urgent matters, 2026-2030, and 2031 and beyond.

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

How Is the Global Financial System Contributing To Erosion Of World Order?

Komal Khan

Currencies and world order are closely interconnected and play a significant role in shaping the global economy and facilitating international trade and finance. The world order, in turn, influences the value and use of different currencies. One important aspect of the relationship between currency and world order is the dominance of certain currencies in the global financial system. Similar to the Euro, the Chinese Yuan's increasing use in international transactions reflects China's growing economic power and its efforts to transform the US led World Order in the Asia-Pacific.

The use of different currencies in Asia reflects political and economic alliances and the balance of power between developed economies and regional states, particularly China, India, and Russia. BRICS is a significant addition to this club.

The countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are endeavoring to establish themselves as advocates for the Global South, offering a different paradigm to the G7. The BRICS group is collaborating to create a unified currency in an effort to move away from the US dollar and challenge America's supremacy. This move coincides with Moscow and Beijing's push for de-

dollarization as a response to Western sanctions. Since the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the BRICS nations have been increasingly distancing themselves from the Western block. India, Brazil, South Africa, and China have abstained from participating in sanctions against Russia. This has become increasingly evident, particularly with the record-high levels of trade between India and Russia, as well as Brazil's reliance on Russian fertilizer.

Being the trend setter, China has been pushing for de-dollarization in a number of ways in order to reduce its dependence on the US dollar and increase the use of its own currency, the Chinese yuan, in international trade and finance. Internationally and with a focus on Asia, China has been seeking currency swap agreements and trade settlements in yuan. Furthermore, China's drive for the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) allowing direct exchange of currencies and pushing for the inclusion of the yuan in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket are significant in this regard. Chinese increased investment in gold as an alternative asset is significant for Chinese soft power influence in the global South and for economies under the US sanctions.

Similarly, despite being a partner to the US in anti-China competition, India has also been pushing for de-dollarization, although to a lesser extent than China. India has been

promoting the use of the rupee in international trade by signing currency swap agreements with other countries, such as Japan, UAE, and South Asia, particularly Sri Lanka. The Indian government has already launched various schemes to encourage the purchase of gold, such as the Gold Monetization Scheme and Sovereign Gold Bonds.

De-dollarization is challenging US order in Asia-Pacific. It is reducing the role of the US dollar in international trade, becoming primary reserve currency, decreasing the demand for US Treasury bonds.

Notably, by challenging the dominance of the US in the global financial and shifting economic power away from the US, order transformation is taking place in the Asia-Pacific. As Asian countries become more economically integrated and less dependent on the US, the balance of political and economic power in the region is shifting away from the US. De-dollarization in Asia is part of a broader trend of multipolarity in the global financial system, with the rise of new economic powers challenging the dominance of the US and the US led World Order. The order in Asia is crucial to the overall world order because Asia is the world's most populous and economically significant region. The balance of power in Asia can influence global politics, security, and economic dynamics.

Several major powers are located in Asia, such as China, Japan, India, and Russia.

These countries have significant military capabilities and economic influence, and their actions can have significant impacts on the rest of the world. For example, China's economic rise and its military modernization have altered the balance of power in Asia and contributed to the country's growing influence globally. Furthermore, Asia is also home to several ongoing geopolitical issues, including tensions on the Korean Peninsula, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. These issues have the potential to escalate into larger conflicts and create instability that could spill over into other parts of the world.

Therefore, the order in Asia is critical to the overall stability of the world order. If there is instability, competition or conflict in Asia, it can have far-reaching consequences for the rest of the world.

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