

GLOBAL YOUTH VOICES

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Supervised by

Junaid Ali

(Director Research at Global Stratagem Insight)

Chief Editor

Ahmed Ali

(Masters Candidate at Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po.)

Assistant Editors

Muhammad Wasay Qasim

Maryam Ashraf

Reviewed by

Alam Nawaz

(Research Coordinator at Global Stratagem Insight)

Compiled and Designed by

Muhtasim Afridi

(Research Fellow at Global Stratagem Insight)

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| About



Global Stratagem Insight (GSI) is an independent, non-partisan platform dedicated to providing in-depth analysis of contemporary trends shaping global peace and security.

We believe that understanding today's complex geopolitical landscape requires more than headlines; it demands critical thinking, diverse perspectives, and informed dialogue.

Global Youth Voices is a special edition, quarterly magazine of GSI, consisting of opinion articles and research papers by scholars from various social sciences backgrounds.



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To serve as a guiding light for policymakers, scholars, and the global community, equipping them with the insight and foresight needed to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world.

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At GSI, we empower critical thinkers by offering a dynamic forum to articulate, exchange, and amplify diverse perspectives. Whether you're a researcher, diplomat, student, or engaged global citizen, your voice matters here.



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GSI

BLOGS

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BLOGS

Disarmament at a Crossroads: U.S.–Iran Tensions and the Future of Non-Proliferation



Rabia Basri

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

The recent joint Israel–U.S. bombing of Iran’s nuclear facilities has raised serious concerns about the credibility of global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, and about the very future of the international non-proliferation regime. It also raises the question: “What motivation do states have to obey the system when they do not gain protection against military attack through abiding by international law?” This is especially problematic in the Middle East, where proliferation risks have long existed and continue to shape regional insecurity.

On April 26, 2025, Iran and the United States were still engaged in the third round of diplomatic discussions over the Iranian nuclear program in Oman, only a few weeks before the attacks. These delicate negotiations were derailed. On June 13, Israel launched its bombing campaign against Iran’s nuclear program after Iran enriched roughly four hundred kilograms of uranium to 60 percent—far beyond what is required for peaceful purposes—while also carrying out the targeted killing of Iranian nuclear scientists. In retaliation, Iran responded with missile and drone strikes.

Less than two weeks later, on June 22, the United States took the battle to the next level and launched a direct strike on three major Iranian nuclear facilities: Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow. These strikes, using bunker-buster bombs, were carried out without Congressional approval. Actions like these not only destroyed diplomatic momentum but also fueled fears that yet another Middle East arms race was being provoked.



A classified U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency assessment admits that the bombing could only delay a potential Iranian weapon by a few months if Tehran had even chosen to pursue one. Experts also believe these attacks are unlikely to release radioactive material beyond the strike areas. In other words, Washington and Tel Aviv resorted to military aggression that achieves little strategically but carries enormous political and security costs.

Iran had already declared its stockpile of 400 kg of uranium enriched to 60% U-235, safeguarded by the United Nations watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which had been inspecting it daily. Yet these inspections were suddenly paused just days before Israel's bombing on June 13, 2025.

It seems clear that Iran anticipated such aggression, or at least understood it was coming. As IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi admitted, Iran had informed the agency it would “take care” of the safeguarded material itself. As a matter of fact, Tehran probably obtained the nuclear fuel in other countries before Israel attacked, so that it could not be sabotaged. Rather than irresponsibility, this demonstrated foresight in protecting its program from unlawful attacks.

This is not the first time diplomacy with Iran has been derailed. Following years of negotiations, in 2015 Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council together with the European Union and Germany, agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and a Roadmap Agreement between Iran and the IAEA. JCPOA provided Iran with sanctions relief in exchange for verifiable restrictions in its nuclear programs with Iran at least one year away from weaponizing. The IAEA received unprecedented access to make monitoring compliance and Iran kept its promises.

However, in 2018, the Trump administration withdrew unilaterally and restored sanctions to the JCPOA despite multiple IAEA statements about Iran's compliance. This open violation of trust contributed to the growing Iranian distrust of Western diplomacy and slowly took Tehran beyond the initial enrichment boundaries. The 2020 assassination of General Qasem Soleimani by Trump further destroyed the illusion of restraint and Iran officially dropped enrichment limits. Such irresponsible U.S. actions destroyed a non-proliferation agreement that was considered one of the most efficient in history.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was meant to curb the proliferation of nuclear arms as well as to promote peaceful nuclear energy flows. Iran, which has been a signatory since 1970, has always proclaimed its nuclear program to be peaceful. Article IV of the treaty assures all member states the right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. Iran's nuclear strategy has best been described as “hedging,” which refers to maintaining the technical capacity for a weapon without actually building one.

Despite this, Iran—a non-nuclear state under constant IAEA scrutiny—was bombed by two states. The first, the United States, claims to defend non-proliferation while violating it through military force. The second, Israel, refuses to sign the NPT altogether while maintaining its undeclared nuclear arsenal. Together, they exposed the hypocrisy and fragility of the global non-proliferation system. Worse still, these attacks were carried out without UN Security Council authorization, undermining international law and arms control structures.

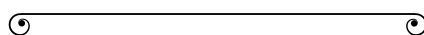


Analysts are worried that these attacks can now compel Iran to reconsider its restraint. Until June 2025, Tehran had no nuclear weapons development plan. However, targeted this way, Iranian leaders might decide that only nuclear deterrence can protect their country against the repeat of aggression in the future.

The aftermath of these reckless military actions is already steering Iran toward serious reconsideration of its NPT membership. Tehran has hinted it may withdraw altogether, as North Korea did in 2003. Such a step would mean the IAEA would lose all access to Iran's nuclear program, leaving the world in the dark.

U.S. officials often point to North Korea as a justification for maximum pressure on Iran. But this comparison is misleading. Unlike Pyongyang, Tehran has remained inside the NPT framework and under IAEA oversight—until that framework was shattered by external aggression. For Iran, sanctions and strikes do not provide security; they only destabilize the region and erode faith in international institutions.

Not only Iran, but the June 2025 strikes threaten the whole global non-proliferation system. When the use of military force is considered through the prism of the concept of non-proliferation, it subverts the legitimacy of the treaty and undermines the collective security. The dangerous precedent is that any country can now be accused of seeking nuclear weapons, and such accusations may be used to justify unlawful bombings or even regime change.



WHY NUCLEAR OPTIMISM HAS WON THE DEBATE? A CASE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS



Huzaifa Younas

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, Islamabad.

The famous debate between Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan revolving around the topic of “whether nuclear weapons cause stability or instability between state relations” took a new turn in view of changing strategic dynamics. The phrases used by Kenneth Waltz is “more may be better” referring to nuclear weapons being a source of stability between state relations. While “more will be worse” is used by his counterpart who refers nuclear pessimism, where nuclear weapons won't stop wars but continue to threaten life on Earth. The article focuses on how contemporary conflicts such as the Iran Israel and the US June conflict where Iran was engaged from multiple fronts due to its nuclear program, the post-Pahalgam Pakistan-India conflict and some conflicts between non-nuclear states have given further leverage to the points raised by nuclear optimist over the years.

Kenneth Waltz applied the theory of realism in this debate, assuming that the world is anarchic i.e. no central authority to regulate state behavior and states can only survive by following the principle of self-help. In the nuclear context, this refers to acquisition of nuclear weapons. Waltz argues that state behavior is highly influenced by the choices it makes, and after applying cost benefit analysis on state decision-making in the case of using a nuclear weapon against its adversary, the state is believed to behave in a rational manner. The result of a cost benefit analysis of whether to wage war or not between two nuclear states would always achieve a point of stability. Meaning that to avoid a nuclear catastrophe, states use these nuclear capabilities to deter each other and preserve peace and stability known as mutual deterrence. The US after the end of cold war was fearful of any state that wanted to acquire nuclear weapons. Therefore, after 1993, US actions against what it considered rogue states increased such as North Korea, the Gulf wars against Iraq and sanctions on Iran, as the US was aware of the fact that by acquiring a nuclear weapon, the phenomenon of mutual deterrence would come into play and the US could not achieve their political objectives through kinetic means for their strategic interests.

However, Scott Sagan argues against Waltz point of nuclear optimism by stating the idea of an accidental warfare that is bound to happen. This “accidental warfare” refers to the decisions taken by the organizing body of a state which is responsible for pushing the “nuclear button”. Sagan argues that under-developed states, non-democratic states, military run governments and terrorist organizations do not think rationally like a state. Therefore, without understanding the consequences of a nuclear exchange, such actors may reach a decision to launch the first strike and initiate a nuclear conflict.

Sagan is criticized for his arguments as they are mostly based on theory rather than empirical data. Terrorist organizations would need to increase their strength in terms of technology, numbers, to acquire and then handle a nuclear arsenal prompting detection. In a similar manner, some states are regarded as irrational by Sagan due to their government style referring to different governance models such as military dictatorships, authoritarian states and populist leaders in democratic states. However, Waltz argues that 75 years of no major war such as WW1 and WW2 says otherwise, where states with different types of governments have acquired nuclear weapons and have behaved rationally since.



Recent conflicts further strengthen Waltz arguments of how the existence of nuclear weapons have either avoided major conflicts or forced states to sign peace agreements. Some contemporary examples are of the Pakistan India standoff in May 2025 and the June standoff between the US, Israel and Iran.

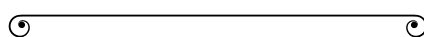
The post Pahalgam attack further escalated tensions between India and Pakistan followed by the launch of Operation Sindhoor from India where missile strikes at 9 different locations were carried out on Pakistani territory and Operation Bunyan al Marsoos by Pakistan as retaliation to India's aggression.

This was the one of the first missile war between two nuclear weapon states since the inception of nuclear weapons. Sagan would argue that the attack of drones and launching missiles between states can be declared a failure of deterrence. However, Waltz argument that nuclear weapons stabilize state relations fits much more to the scenario, as the outcome of the war was what Waltz had predicted in writings.

Primarily, the strikes and retaliatory strikes were controlled in a sense that the escalation ladder remained under the nuclear option at all times. Secondly, Trump intervened and arbitrated a ceasefire before the two states could shift to a nuclear option. This strengthens Waltz's argument that the existence of a nuclear deterrent can influence state behavior to avoid the possibility of escalation of a conflict.

The second recent case study that relates to nuclear optimism is the US, Israel and Iran conflict. Waltz argument is relevant in the sense that Israel primarily attacked Iran because it feared a nuclear Iran. In a similar manner, if Iran had become a nuclear power such an attack would not have taken place. Secondly, the intervention of US in the war showcased the threats of nuclear politics that Iran would have used against its adversaries.

In conclusion, state behavior is highly influenced by the state of anarchy that it finds itself in. This leads it towards power maximization, according to Waltz for securing its interests. This creates a balance of power between different states and maintains an extent of relative peace. As seen in contemporary conflicts, powerful states with nuclear capabilities are able to deter full-scale wars while states like Iran would avoid conflicts if it acquires nuclear weapons.



SHOULD ARMED DRONES BE REGULATED BY ARMS CONTROL TREATIES?



Sarina Tareen

The author is an intern of GSI and MS research scholar at Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences.

The rapid rise of armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) has fundamentally transformed modern warfare, offering cost-effective, lethal, and flexible tools that minimize risks to personnel. Such innovations represented various surveillance drones, including small and large, fixed-wing drones and the propelled nature of artificial intelligence (AI). These drones are enabling increasingly autonomous systems. However, as their global proliferation accelerates, a pressing question arises: Should arms drones be regulated under formal arms control treaties? The absence of a binding UAV-Specific, given the strategic, legal, and ethical challenges of their use. It is urgent to address this regulatory gap to prevent drone warfare from becoming ungovernable.

The use of armed drones has become inevitable in the recent warfare, including counter-terrorist operations in Iraq (ISIS), Yemen (Al Qaeda), and Syria, as well as interstate conflicts, like in Ukraine. Formerly under monopoly by big powers, UAV technology is now accessible to a variety of state and non-state actors.

For instance, in Ukraine, affordable drones such as the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and modified commercial quadcopters have proven critical for surveillance and strikes. Ukrainian officials plan to produce 4.5 million drones by the end of 2025, highlighting their growing importance. Similarly, the 2024 Israel-Hezbollah conflict demonstrated the power of drone swarms, which overwhelmed defenses and shifted. Modern drones have evolved far beyond simple remote-controlled systems. For example, Israel employs AI-driven drones in Gaza to scan buildings for targeting, while future systems.

It encompasses drone swarms, that could operate without human intervention or connection lines, which are unprecedented dangers. These lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) are of great ethical concern, since they have the potential to attack targets without human control and would often be unethical to international humanitarian law. Subsequently, this absence of control increases the risks of such developments.

Strategically, drone proliferation fuels instability. Turkey has expanded its influence in Syria and Libya through drone deployments. While Iran supplies UAVs to proxy groups in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, enabling cross-border strikes. Moreover, U.S. drone operations in Somalia and Yemen have faced accusations of extrajudicial killings and civilian casualties, often violating sovereignty. To add, In south Asia, the July 2025 Pahalgam incident, where Pakistan intercepted 25 Indian drones called Israeli-made Harop loitering munitions over Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi using jamming and kinetic countermeasures. This demonstrates how drones increase tensions between states quickly and vaguely. Also, non-state actors such as ISIS, the Houthis, and even criminal groups in Latin America are taking up anti-drone weapons which continue to destabilize regions such as South Asia, and the Balkans.

Existing International mechanisms inadequately address armed drones. The only legally binding framework in the field of conventional arms transfers, including some drones, is the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) adopted in 2013 that is encouraging states to block weapons that end up in the hands of terrorists or human rights abusers. Nevertheless, its efficiency suffers due to the low compliance, lack of enforcement, and non-participation by major drone producers like the United States, Russia, China, India and Israel.



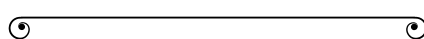
Similarly, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) loosely applies to UAVs with certain capabilities but there is no regulation on their employments and major countries manufacturers such as China, Iran and Israel are not signatories. The Wassenaar arrangement imposes voluntary export control, but enforcement is inconsistent. In the meantime, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) - in its proposal of considering unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) a subcategory of combat aircraft, promotes transparency, yet it lacks universal ratification and punitive measures. but is not binding, nor does it imply punitive procedures.

Armed drones should be controlled via arms control conventions to reduce the legal, ethical and strategic dangers. Having a specific treaty would dictate clear guidelines of development, transfer and use and the obligation to adhere international humanitarian law and safeguard civilians. In particular, it could mandate transparency in transfers of drones, prohibit their sale to non-state actors, and establish requirements on autonomy so that fully autonomous systems are not permitted without any human managerial control. Tentatively, intermediate steps that might start trust-building on the way to long-term treaty-related efforts include systems such as voluntary export controls and the reporting of transparent uses.

For example, the ATT's Article 5.3 encourages applying its provisions to a broad range of conventional weapons, including drones, while strengthening UNROCA's reporting and expanding MTCR and Wassenaar membership could enhance accountability.

Nonetheless, there are still some major problems. Binding regulations are opposed by major powers as they fear limitation of military capabilities and the production of the major producers such as US, Russia, China, India and Israel is non-participatory, which undermines the current regimes. Moreover, the blistering development of technologies makes it difficult to create regulations that would not lose relevance. A treaty must balance specifically for drones' unique risks with flexibly for future innovation. To improve these situations, international community should prioritize strengthening ATT compliance, negotiating a UAV-specific treaty, promoting transparent reporting, and establishing standards for human oversight in autonomous system.

Unrestricted spread of armed drones may pose global instability because the technology is accessible, deadly, and thus autonomous. From Ukraine's FPV drone operations against Russian forces to rising drone deployments in south Asia and the Balkans, these systems are now central to conflict dynamics. Existing frameworks like the ATT, the MTCR, and the Wassenaar Arrangement, is inadequate because they have limited membership, weak enforcement, and lack of specificity. Therefore, an effective arms control treaty for drones is both a moral and strategic imperative to ensure responsible use.



FROM FRAGMENTED POLICIES TO UNIFIED ACTION: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN



Fatima Nisar

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar, and holds a Master's in History.

Climate Change is one of the most serious global challenges of our time which has surpassed all other concerns the world is facing today and Pakistan is one of those countries of the world which is on the brink of climate injustice because it has suffered a lot at the hands of the climate change and it is evident that it is the culprit due to its damage in different forms be it socially, economically, or environmentally. According to the annual assessment data in the Climate Risk Index (CRI) for 2025 report which was released by the European think tank German Watch, Pakistan ranks as 1st among top ten countries. Following the deadly floods of 2025, drastic floods of 2022 and even stand on exceptionally high flooding alert on these days along with recurring droughts and increasingly severe heat waves, climate-related catastrophes have shifted from being potential threats to immediate challenges. Even with rising awareness and its participation in significant international climate agreements, the country's policy approach is still fragmented, reactive, lacks coherence and proper coordination and faces implementation challenges due to institutional weaknesses and competing socio-economic priorities.

This year again unprecedented monsoon rains, intensified by climate change, have triggered widespread flooding, land sliding, and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) across the Country. According to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reports, to date, at least 819 people have died, more than 1,100 have been injured, and over 63,000 people have been displaced, with hundreds of thousands more indirectly affected. The floods have damaged or destroyed nearly 9,000 houses, 658 km of roads, 238 bridges, and 6,138 livestock, severely impacting mobility, livelihoods, and access to basic services.

Since 2022, Pakistan has been struck by its worst flooding it is not simply just because of the natural catastrophe but because of the fragmented policies that struggle to tackle climate change.

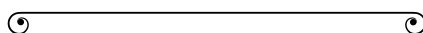
As the rising toll of climate disasters from the last two decades shows that Pakistan is facing accelerating climate change impacts and the successive disasters highlighted that lessons are not being learned. The affected people cannot wait for the abstract promises of the government because their lives and future depend on their actions, not words. The time is now. The government must turn lessons into actions as Climate injustice has already cost Pakistan too much.

It is true that early on Pakistan acknowledged the need of combating climate change and started developing climate change policies and initiatives like the National Climate Change Policy, the nation's initial official action regarding climate change and other commendable climate change provincial based strategies which suggest various steps for adaptation in various sectors but all these policies operate independently. What Pakistan needs most is an urgent transparency to mitigate these risks by adopting a holistic and unified governance approach for the sustainable future of its citizens in the next few decades.

For this, the governing bodies must learn the lesson which is the dire need for better preparation. Along with it they must identify the challenges and gaps in Pakistan's Climate Change Policy at the execution and implementation stage and what sagacious steps and successful approaches are needed to prioritize the Pakistan's Climate and Environmental policy agendas, urging policy makers and stakeholders to take action to mitigate the negative impacts.

Moreover, Pakistan is a developing country and the most disastrous impacts of climate change are on its economy. The loss of 2010, 2022 and now 2025 are the best examples to illustrate such impacts. The report of World Bank also states that its Climate Change will reduce Pakistan's GDP by 18 to 20% by 2050. Moreover, the report of Asian Development Bank (ADB) also indicates that Pakistan's GDP could drain 12% by Climate Change in 2070. So Pakistan as a Federation must take a strong unified stand, policy and action plan for an effective governance response to the Climate related policies as they are the need of the hour. The suggestion of coordinated national strategy should be taken seriously in order to help both policymakers and stakeholders to make wise choices and take effective action. This will in turn help them to work for the betterment of society and will lead to implement existing policy with more reforms by working on all the shortcomings that are because of the fragmentation of institutions.

To sum up, there are various negative impacts of climate change that directly or indirectly affect the lives of millions of citizens in various forms. Therefore, the central government, the provincial government, the sub provincial governments and local level institutions all are equally important so they all must be taken at the table for creating those solutions and policies which are inclusive and grounded for the well-being and future of its own people.



ARE CARBON TAXES THE MOST DEMOCRATIC TOOL IN THE CLIMATE POLICY TOOLKIT?



Navinya N

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of Economics at PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, India.

We all want a greener planet. But should the fight against climate change make life harder for the common person?

Carbon taxes are often described as the smartest solution to reduce pollution. The logic is simple - if polluting costs money, people and companies will pollute less. But in reality, those who pollute the least often pay the most.

Consider a construction worker, a vegetable vendor, or a college student from a middle-income household. They don't fly often, drive fancy cars, or run factories. Yet when fuel prices rise or electricity becomes costly due to carbon taxes, their budgets get the biggest hit. On the other hand, corporations and wealthy individuals can afford the added costs or simply pass them down.

Climate activists and policymakers who advocate for carbon taxes often argue, "The money goes back to the people." In theory, yes, through rebates or social schemes. *But, how often does that actually happen?* In practice, the redistribution is either delayed, badly designed, or never reaches those at the margins. We are left with a policy that might look fair on paper, but it only makes life harder for those who are already hit hardest by climate change.

Instead of repeating the same old promise that carbon tax revenues will "go back to the people," we need to make sure that carbon tax revenues actually show up in ways people can see and feel. That means putting it into things that have an impact on people's daily life, like helping low-income families put solar panels on their rooftops, making LPG cylinders affordable so no one has to cook with smoky firewood, or giving zero-interest loans so people can buy energy-efficient fridges and lights that lower both their bills and their carbon footprint. Big companies should be instructed as 'If they want tax breaks, they should prove they're cutting emissions or investing in clean energy'. No action, no benefits.

We also have to remember that climate policies are not just about numbers and targets, They are about people's dignity. If a worker feels humiliated because he cannot afford clean fuel, that is not progress. If a family has to cut back on meals just to pay higher electricity bills, then the policy has failed its moral test, no matter how impressive the emission reduction data looks on paper.

The beauty of democracy is that it works best when people feel ownership over the solutions. Imagine how powerful it would be if communities saw carbon tax revenues being used to build local solar plants, set up electric charging stations in their neighbourhood. People would not only accept these taxes, but they would also become proud participants in the transition. Climate policy would no longer feel like a punishment, but a partnership.



One of the clearest examples comes from Canada, where the government introduced a carbon tax, it knew the biggest fear was that rising fuel and heating costs would fall hardest on middle- and low-income households. To prevent this, they created the *Climate Action Incentive Payment*. Instead of expecting families to wait for complicated subsidies, the government put money directly into their accounts or credited it to their tax returns. For many low- and middle-income families, the rebate wasn't just enough to cover the added costs of fuel it actually gave them a little extra. Wealthier households, who consumed more energy through big houses, frequent flights, or large cars, didn't benefit as much because their carbon-related expenses were much higher. This way, the burden shifted onto the bigger polluters, while ordinary families could feel immediate relief. The key was visibility as people saw the money, trusted the system, and understood that climate policy was designed with them in mind.

Another effective powerful story comes from the India's Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. For decades, millions of poor households relied on firewood, cow dung, or kerosene for cooking. The smoke wasn't just bad for the environment, it filled homes with toxic air, harming the health of women and children. When the Ujjwala scheme provided subsidized LPG connections, it changed daily life in a very real way. A mother in a small village no longer had to spend hours gathering firewood. Cooking became faster, cleaner, and safer. Families were protected from the constant choking smoke, and the carbon footprint of households reduced at the same time. For many, this wasn't just about clean fuel it was about dignity, time, and health.

These two examples shows that climate policies don't have to feel like punishment. They can be designed so that people actually experience relief and empowerment in their daily lives. Canada's rebates and India's LPG subsidies both prove a simple truth: if climate action puts people first, then ordinary citizens will not resist it but they will support it, because they see how it improves their lives. That is what real democracy in climate policy looks like.

“If the road to a greener planet leaves the poor behind, it isn't progress; it's betrayal.”

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AFGHAN WOMEN: SIDE-EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS



Sana Ahmadzai

The author is an Intern of GSI and a research scholar of political science at Kabul University, Afghanistan.

Living in Afghanistan requires skills especially when a female born in Afghanistan. Although from the first breath to the last breath they fight for live, rights, and natural disasters, this fight never ends and continue. Today Afghan women face with new challenges which caused by Climate Changes. Climate change just not cause environmental crisis, but also cause social and gendered crisis. Afghanistan where more than four decades of conflict have already tense base substructure and livelihoods, climate change affect as threat multiplier. From my perspective, the impact on Afghan women is both profound and underacknowledged. This essay argues that climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, and that Afghan women must be recognized not only as victims but as agents of resilience and change. Mainly this essay would focus on the effects of climate change from historical and climatic realities, gendered vulnerabilities, health and psychological toll, economic displacement and migration, women as agents of change, to opinion and call to action.

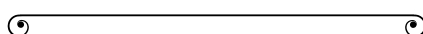
Rising temperature 1.8°C since 1960 is nearly double the global average in Afghanistan. This is not a distant statistic; it translates into failed crops, dried rivers, and displaced families. Technically, past five year were the most catastrophic years, when we were witnessed of the most three catastrophic earthquakes, floods and other disaster which caused by climate changes. Furthermore, Women, especially in rural areas, bear the brunt of these changes. Their dependence on agriculture and natural resources makes them disproportionately vulnerable, yet their roles are often minimized in policy and practice. Although, there was a time that women made the policy base on the need of effected people and that polices were successful, currently we do not have a woman in policy-making level to pay attention to the effected women life. For instance, the last earthquake catastrophe in Konar, there were thousand of women and children who need a females caregiver, but due to the government limitation of girls education and women work, they would not receive proper services and caused more casualties.

In my view, the gendered impact of climate change in Afghanistan is inseparable from cultural and institutional barriers. Moreover, in home mother or mostly female member of family are responsible to manage family food storage. Same in society, women can manage it very well, however, Women are exposed to extreme weather, food insecurity, and violence, while being excluded from formal decision-making. Their caregiving roles, though essential, are rarely acknowledged in climate governance. This invisibility is not accidental—it is systemic. This invisibility makes the crisis more difficult to deal with it and the life of Afghan women has faced many difficulties. Additionally, Climate change is also a health crisis. Afghan women face increased risks of malnutrition, heat-related illnesses, and limited access to healthcare. The malnutrition cases increase significantly in the past five years ago especially among pregnant women. Who must feed their unborn child also, in case they do not have enough food to feed themselves. Moreover, based on IMAM report, around 40,000 children in Afghanistan are in bad health situation because of malnutrition, which are directly or indirectly related to mother health situation and nitrated. Furthermore, the psychological toll is equally severe. Many women report anxiety, depression, and trauma linked to environmental stressors. These mental health challenges are rarely addressed in adaptation strategies, yet they are central to resilience.



As climate disasters intensify, displacement becomes inevitable. Afghan families from many years are in circle of migration natural disasters like: drought, floods, earthquake, storms and so on. Afghan women and children are especially vulnerable during migration, facing exploitation and violence. While men often migrate for work, women are left to manage households and farms with little support. This shift in responsibility is rarely accompanied by a shift in rights or resources, and lack of accessibility to the resources authority make women to suffer more than men. In Afghan society men are responsible for earning, but it is up to women to manage and divide it, and that is why they responsibilities of women are more vital than men. In Afghanistan the role in families is like this: it does not matter how much men earn, but it is important that the mother of family should managed as each member must receive their share. So, if men earn little, it would not affect him but affect the mother responsibility. Despite these challenges, Afghan women are not passive victims. Community-led initiatives—such as the revival of traditional Karez irrigation systems—showcase their leadership. Projects like the Community Resilience and Livelihoods Project (CRLP) have empowered women economically and socially. These examples prove that when given the opportunity, Afghan women lead with innovation and strength.

Climate change in Afghanistan is a gendered crisis. But it is also an opportunity—to rethink governance, empower communities, and center women in climate solutions. The future of Afghanistan’s resilience depends on whether we choose to recognize and support the women who are already leading the way. In my opinion, the current climate discourse in Afghanistan is incomplete without the inclusion of women’s voices. Legal reforms, education, and inclusive governance are not optional—they are urgent. Afghan women must be seen as central to climate resilience, not peripheral. Their lived experiences, knowledge systems, and leadership are indispensable to sustainable development.



CAN NUCLEAR ENERGY HELP SOLVE PAKISTAN'S ENERGY CRISIS?



Fatima Haider

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar, and holds an MPhil in International Relations from National Defence University Islamabad.

Each summer, when temperature rises over 45°C, millions of Pakistanis have to face hours-long blackouts as their homes and companies were frozen by the collapsing energy system. High demand, the inefficiency of electricity infrastructure, and the strong fossil-based fuel dependence have long characterized Pakistan as one of the countries with a consistent electricity crisis, and the gap reached 7,500 MW - 8,000 MW in 2025. Although attempts are being made to increase renewables, and solar and wind are intermittent and underutilized. In these regards, nuclear energy, which was always viewed with skepticism because of the issues of safety and proliferation, is staging a comeback all around the world as a dependable source of low-carbon energy. Nuclear is not the ultimate solution but it can offer future energy to Pakistan, provided that it is used wisely, with investment and good regulation.

Since more than 67% of the Pakistani population is under 30, the argument about the state of future energy in Pakistan is both technical as well as generational. Some of the ways through which talks about nuclear energy can become normal where myths are disproved and decisions about nuclear energy can be made through use of science is through innovation and championing by the youth to be the first in clean energy.

The reason is that there is a promising trend in the electricity production in Pakistan electricity production of Pakistan in 2025 that will integrate the low-carbon sources, as well as the fossil fuel. The declining share of about 46.3% of overall generation is still controlled by fossil fuels. By contrast, the proportion of low-carbon energy sources today is 53.7% which is a rather significant shift towards cleaner electricity. Under this category, hydropower is the highest with 24.4%, then renewables with 12.2%, then nuclear energy with 7.8%. This slow, yet consistent diversification means fewer and fewer sources of imported fossil fuels and more and more sources of indigenous, sustainable fuel. The changing energy mix in Pakistan, hence, reflects the milestones gained and the opportunities to enhance the existing clean technologies and maintain energy security and resilience in the long term.

An overview of the Energy Crisis in Pakistan

The energy crisis in Pakistan is a systematic issue, and the deficit of electricity may be as high as 6,000 MW during peak summer times in the year 2024 and 2025, which implies 6-12 hours of load shedding across urban locations and rural territories. This scarcity has drastically affected the manufacturing activities, studying procedures, and healthcare facilities, especially in the undeveloped areas. Though the solar and hydropower has increased, it is intermittent and geographically limited, and they can rarely meet the national demand. The inability to diversify base-load supply hinders structural strengths of long-term energy planning. It is against this background that the role of nuclear energy, as one of the pillars in various nations to achieve a stable, long-term, and climate-resilient mix needs to be re-examined.



Chashma Nuclear Power Plant
Punjab, Pakistan

The Argument of Nuclear Energy

Facing more frequent power outages and climate risks, nuclear power is one of the possible sources of low-carbon and steady base-load power that Pakistan should consider. In comparison to solar and wind power, which are only available periodically, the nuclear plants on one hand offer constant power generation capacity, with no need of vast amount of land to produce abundance of power on the other hand, and almost no emitted carbon footprint throughout its operation. According to the Economic Survey 2024-25, the operational nuclear infrastructure at Pakistan, which includes four Chashma reactors (C-1 to C-4) and KANUPP-2 and KANUPP-3 in Karachi all contribute to about 3530 MW of the national grid, or about 8.7% of the national grid.

Nuclear power is not the only strategic reason to use nuclear energy. It provides energy security based on the fact that it will decrease dependence on unreliable fossil fuels (especially liquefied natural gas (LNG)) imports, which experienced a rise in prices across the entire world because of geopolitical upheavals. Nuclear technology is also long-lived and scalable, with both France and China and the UAE actively investing in the development of the next generation reactors to balance their grids and decarbonize their economies.

But the nuclear development in Pakistan must be weighed down, the achievement must be sought on the same grounds with safeguard, regulation laws and with confidence of the masses despite the fact that the use of nuclear power is not harmful but there is no danger and governance question that must be discussed openly.

In addition, nuclear waste has continued posing a problem. Pakistan does not have a permanent geological repository and produces on-site interim storage, which has a danger to the environment and security. Moreover, capital costs are very high and nuclear energy facilities demand a very long lead times unless international allied partnerships are available.

Is Pakistan prepared to expand the nuclear energy?

Although it is a potential energy source of future in Pakistan, nuclear energy can only be developed successfully when Pakistan is ready institutionally, technically and socio-politically ready. On institutional level, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) has exhibited operational capability in overseeing the civilian nuclear installations, and the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) oversees through a legal and safety framework that conforms to the guidelines of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Pakistan has continued with full-scope IAEA safeguards to ensure there is maximum commitment to international norms on its civilian reactors.

In technical terms, the number of nuclear engineers in Pakistan is large but confined (mostly trained in institutions related to PAEC including PIEAS (Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences)). Nevertheless, expansion in the nuclear sector will demand heavy investments towards building human resources, safety studies, and modern reactor designs. The result is that the country will be over dependent on foreign suppliers, should it fail to enhance its local manufacturing and fuel cycle capacities.

The other necessary condition is readiness on the part of the population and the political community. Even though, the utilisation of nuclear energy is favoured by most of the elite policy circles, this utilisation is received with an opinion that there are more prejudices about the risk of accidents and secrets that is definitely present. The people need to also conduct a critical communications and awareness program to bring transparency and to be able to gain some trust. Secondly, there is no policy-coherency among the ministries especially the energy ministry, climatic change and planning as it is currently, to enable the long term strategic integration.

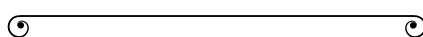
In short, Pakistan has all the infrastructure behind it, which would likely support nuclear expansion but when it comes down to it, it has to bridge institutional silos and it has to improve its human capital, create a sense of societal acceptance through open governance.

The Way Forward: Strategic Integration of Nuclear as a component of Energy Mix in Pakistan

In the context of constantly growing energy requirement and climatic emergency in Pakistan, a multi-faceted energy policy is required that is of an all-round nature without mentioning nuclear-powered energy, individually or as an addition to solar, wind, and hydro energy. Renewable intermittence may be offset by the fact that nuclear power plants can provide a base-load to combine with renewables in raising overall grid reliability.

This requires consideration of future investment in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), that are simple to scale and can be installed with reduced risk, and are best situated in remote or under-electrified locations. Pakistan nuclear ambitions should be linked to climatic commitments to which it has bound itself through its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) made under the Paris Agreement. Nuclear energy needs to be incorporated in the overall system of sustainable development in Pakistan under the conditions of institutional openness, ecology, and liberalization of power supply.

Finally, the Pakistani energy crisis is a rather broad and multifaceted issue, which is based on its structural inefficiencies, fossil sources, over-saturation and climate shock-vulnerabilities. Nuclear energy is not going to solve all energy problems, but it will remain a significant part of the many and varied energy future. Nuclear power may lead to the source of low-carbon and stable power that can make Pakistan take another step forward when applied in a transparent and, most importantly, climate-friendly manner by adhering to the set of rules and following the international standards of nuclear power usage. The discourse within the country on the lack of fear but instead education and practicality has been long overdue. Nuclear energy cannot and will not just exist in a linear ascent, but Pakistan has significant part to play in establishing a more sustainable, secure and just energy system and incorporating nuclear energy into the equation is merely a piece of the puzzle.



US-CHINA RIVALRY IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI): IMPLICATIONS FOR WORLD PEACE



Muhammad Hasnain Shams

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar of International Relations, and graduate of the University of Peshawar.

In 1945, the nuclear bomb was celebrated as a triumph and pride in technological dominance led to a perilous arms race. Today, in 2025, it is artificial intelligence (AI), another double-edged sword, that promises progress, but it casts a shadow of surveillance, autonomous weapons, and algorithmic wars.

The spiral development of AI manifests that the US-China Rivalry in AI is not just a tech competition. It is a geopolitical hotbed that could rupture the existing rule-based order. Some uninformed optimists boast about AI as a golden ticket for boosting economies and inventing new stuff. But what they overlook is the darker side of AI. Think mass surveillance networks. Weapon systems that make their own decisions. Digital attacks that nobody sees coming.

The competing powers are mercilessly deploying AI in every aspect of war. From ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), command, control & communication (C3), to Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs). The “intelligentized warfare” doctrine of the PLA calls for training machines to make battlefield decisions quickly, as a flash. The US, in response, counters the measures of China by investing and deploying military AI. The result? A future where human judgment is replaced by AI speed, with no room for negotiation or mercy.

AI is a new battleground for great power competition. It has replaced diplomacy with data. The states have directed their finances towards building AI-backed military applications. The US's use of AI in the military is seen by its adversaries as an aggressive move, and the same applies vice versa. It has resulted in the reciprocal development and deployment of AI-driven military arsenals by both the states, commonly referred to as the security dilemma. In the security dilemma, states try to maximize their security because there is no world government to prevent threats to their survival. As for now, there are no mutually agreed, universally accepted regulations and treaties to restrict the ongoing arms race. If we imagine a world where AI misinterprets a signal from a great power, reacts without human consensus, and ignites a war. One thing is obvious: the margin of error is razor-thin, and yes, the consequences are catastrophic.

Trust, multilateralism, and the possibility of cooperative governance are other victims of the exacerbating US-China rivalry in AI. The prevailing world order calls for fostering collaboration on any shared challenges—like climate resilience, disaster prediction, or pandemic response. In the race for AI, both countries are investing energy into overtaking one another, keeping diplomacy secondary to dominance. This competitive approach discourages openness, limits data sharing, and creates mistrust among allies and foes alike.

Peace in a world plagued by crises of interdependence is based on technological cooperation and not isolation. However, AI forums remain disjointed, and efforts towards creating universally applicable ethical frameworks have faltered as a result of such competition. The countries of the Global South are caught in the middle, with the need to decide whether to align with one digital camp over the other, eroding global solidarity. Without

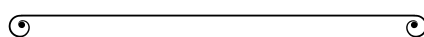


shared institutions to govern AI peacefully, the world will descend into a technology-driven cold war—a scenario where miscommunication, mistrust, or failure can yield actual conflict. Peace in the AI era requires common rules, not rival power plays. An argument against the bad side of AI some raise is that it spurs innovation—a valid argument.

As human history suggests that the internet, space travel, and even vaccine breakthroughs resulted from rivalries. But unfortunately, the case with artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally different. AI is not only about the creation of tools that would assist humans in innovation. We are developing and deploying unmanned systems that can decide and act on behalf of humans, and their decisions will affect the lives, security, and even lead to wars. The development of such technologies in a world ruled by mistrust and secrecy, the risk of misjudgment and misinterpretation multiplies. Therefore, the reciprocal deployment of AI in the military domain without the oversight of global ethical frameworks could spiral into unintended conflicts. In this case, rivalry doesn't inspire progress—it endangers peace.

There is another side of artificial intelligence development and deployment that cannot be overlooked. The technological innovation and economic integration of AI race is driving innovation, creating new industries, and reshaping global supply chains. In an era dominated by the emergence of new and unprecedented technologies, tech-sovereignty has become a strategic imperative for the two powers. Following the necessity to act, in 2017, China announced its AI plan for 2030 to lead in the contest to develop and deploy sophisticated AI infrastructure to counter the USA hegemony. The USA, in turn, has invested heavily in private sector and military applications to uphold its technological dominance. As tech-rivalry has intensified, one fortunate and promising development occurred in automation, data analytics, and smart systems. These developments have propelled economic progress and greater efficiency around the globe. Data indicates that the threat of militarization, ethical issues and global insecurity outweighs the benefit offered by AI.

As AI has become an indispensable geopolitical player, are we careening in the direction of progress or orchestrating our own annihilation? The answer to this enigma is encapsulated in the policies of the great powers, China and the USA. Either they could shake hands to regulate the AI technology, or else continue their spiral development and deployment in the military. Therefore, concerning world peace, AI will either be the architecture of peace or the engine of chaos.



RESISTING THE BEAR: UKRAINE'S DEFENSE EVOLUTION AND THE GLOBAL SECURITY ORDER



Tahira Mushtaq

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the University of Sargodha.

The conflict in Ukraine has escalated and evolved beyond Eastern European boundaries and is now a key determinant in the international security order. The prevailing narrative in early 2022 was that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a well-planned blitzkrieg that would result in the quick capture of Kyiv. Ukraine has also been able to transform its defense policies, which in turn has prompted a re-evaluation of NATO strategy.

Ukrainian innovation emerged from the full-scale invasion of the country in 2022. Civilian volunteers alongside international military aid transformed the theater of war. Supported by American and British intelligence, Ukrainian forces adopted asymmetric warfare, employing drone strikes, guerrilla raids, and Western precision missiles to dismantle Russia's heavily armored units and supply lines.

The early mastery of the Bayraktar TB2 drones and later the HIMARS system by Ukrainian forces marked a shift in the paradigm of warfare. Ukraine proved that agility and technology outclasses brute force.

Ukrainians had over a million personnel mobilized by 2023. While issues of attrition and fatigue persist, Ukraine has matured into an active military contender and a competent resilient force. Its command, logistics, and strategies have grown in sophistication and now, in many ways, rival other NATO countries.

Ukraine's defense evolution must be understood in the context of Western political will and strategy. Between 2022 and 2024, the United States emerged as Kyiv's chief supporter, spending more than \$73 billion in military and economic aid. The European Union and several NATO countries have individually and collectively contributed tens of billions of dollars in aid, equipment, active sanctions on Russia, and energy decoupling.

Support, however, has not been consistent. The ongoing aid package discussions in Washington illustrate the friction between strategic support and domestic political maneuvering. With the 2024 presidential elections around the corner, and attention increasingly diverted because of the Gaza conflict, the Sahel, and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific, Ukraine risks losing prioritization on the global agenda in western politics.

Within Europe, countries like Poland and the Baltic states have been ardent supporters of Ukraine while Hungary and Slovakia have adopted more Russia-leaning and neutral stances. The defense policy shift known as Germany's *Zeitenwende*, while resulting in increased military spending, has been marked by Berlin's persistent reputation for underreporting the delivery of key weapon systems.

In Ukraine, it has been noted that there is an enduring phenomenon termed 'Ukraine fatigue' which has been on the rise especially due to the lack of sufficient enthusiasm to support Ukraine on the global front when viewed in the context of public opinion polls. This Ukraine fatigue continues to push Kyiv towards self-sustaining defenses and military innovation.

Over the years, Russia has embraced the moniker ‘the Bear’, and it has been suggested that the country entered the war with the intentions of a swift victory so that Ukraine could easily be assimilated. Unfortunately, Russia has been continuously bogged down in the war, and there are estimates that claim that the country has suffered over 300,000 casualties alongside waging the largest war in Europe since WWII. It has suffered from heightened economic hardship and sanctions which have led to an isolationist stance in the western world.

Despite the overwhelming economic distress and sanctions, Russia has been able to change its strategy towards a war of attrition. The change towards energy grids and ports primarily serve the purpose of turning Civilians and especially Ukrainians economically impotent and lowering their morale. In the years of 2023 and 2024, over 1,200 missiles and drones have aimed to attack civilians which has led to economic crippling alongside internal displacement. Even though these tactics are aimed towards crippling Ukraine economically, it has led to heightened nationalism towards Ukraine.

As far as Ukraine’s defiance and NATO is concerned, this is the greatest occurrence in the history of NATO. Although NATO executed operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya, and even engaged in counter-piracy missions during and after the Cold War, it still faced difficulties in defining a cohesive unifying long-term purpose. However, the invasion has rallied NATO members to unite as one. Military spending has also increased and now, out of the 31 members, 31 have had 18 increase their military spending.

NATO’s ‘alliance’ now includes Sweden and Finland, the previously neutral states. Sweden and Finland’s non-alignment has now ended with Finland joining NATO in April 2023. Moreover, their geographic positioning greatly helps NATO with military strategies in the Arctic and Baltic regions improving Russia’s encirclement.



NATO is not inclined to offer Ukraine membership. During the 2023 Vilnius Summit, leaders reaffirmed that “Ukraine’s future is in NATO” but provided no timeframe, removed the Membership Action Plan, and sidestepped a direct Article 5 security guarantee. Instead, the NATO–Ukraine Council grants Ukraine Advanced Associate status, affording Kyiv equal status in consultations, participation in joint exercises, and intelligence sharing—substantial collaboration that halts short of full membership.

Some critics blame NATO for provoking Russia by expanding its territories. Evidence increasingly suggests, however, that Putin’s revisionism is more ideological than reactive, focused on rebuilding influence over Soviet-era territories. This perspective supports the notion that the need for appeasement that seeks to counter aggression does not work.

The effects of the Ukraine war have been terribly resonant. Restructuring of the world energy markets has drastically shifted. Europe reduced its reliance on Russian gas by more than eighty percent, switching to US, Qatar, and Norway for LNG imports. One of the world’s leading grain suppliers, Ukraine, is currently facing export blockades from Russia in the Black Sea. This has compromised food security and triggered rampant inflation in regions like Africa and the Middle East.

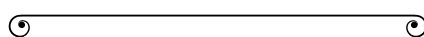
Germany’s Rheinmetall, US’s Lockheed Martin and Turkey’s Baykar are defying Western sanctions by increasing production. With the ongoing war, Western defense industries are flourishing and realizing they no longer have “peace dividends.” With countries rapidly increasing budgets and military spending, statecraft is once again centered on war.

As a result of the war, Ukraine’s economy experienced a decrease of 30% in 2022, suffering from inflation, high unemployment rates, and widespread infrastructural damage. The World Bank estimates that the country’s post-war reconstruction costs will be over 486 billion dollars. The European Union is working on a reconstruction plan spanning multiple decades, but the war’s outcome will determine its feasibility.

Ukraine’s ability to not only endure but also evolve the 21st century warfighting paradigm has taken the world by surprise. Greater Ukraine’s resolve has, however, created a model for smaller countries threatened by larger adversaries. That said, it would be a mistake to rely solely on this paradigm as the only deterrence for aggressors.

In the absence of international support, effective governance, systemic change and rebuilding, Ukraine will find it increasingly challenging to defend itself. The conflict has transcended the singular focus of a nation’s sovereignty as it questions the international order established post world war two, and is a contest of border integrity versus imperialistic pursuits.

Defending itself against the Bear has been horrifically costly for Ukraine. Yet, to this very day, Ukraine’s defiance has galvanized the West, reinforced other countries feeling the heat from new aggression, and brought forth the sobering U.S. reality that global security is now a daily responsibility.



RENEWED INDO-ISRAEL DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN



Hammad Gillani

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

The famous politician and advisor Chanakya Kautilya famously said, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” As of July 2025, Pakistan's strategic circles are alarmed about India's purchase of Israeli-made air-launched Long Range Artillery (LORA) missiles. India and Israel have long been enjoying a strategic partnership, collaborating in the fields of defense, cybersecurity, intelligence, and, most recently, network-centric electronic warfare. What did these evolving ties between India and Israel mean for Pakistan? Does this partnership aim to combat a shared enemy? Or what's the logic behind Indo-Israel doctrinal similarity?

Israel wants dominance in the Middle East, while India wants to remain a South Asian Tiger. The strengthening ties between India and Israel have always been a matter of concern for Pakistan, but an immediate boost in advanced offensive-defensive procurements, especially after the May 2025 military standoff between India and Pakistan, has created an environment where both India and Israel are portraying a picture of two friends with a common foe. This would definitely have profound implications for Pakistan and the broader regional stability.

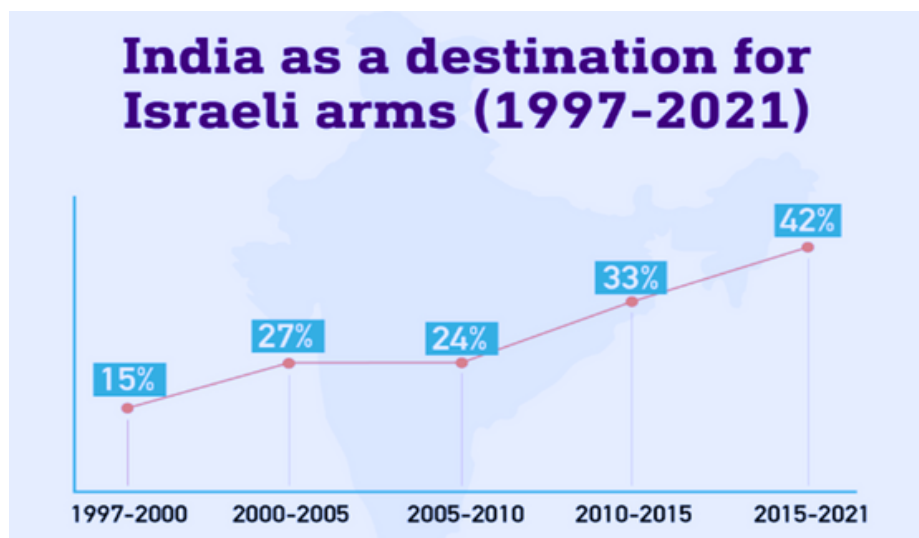


Figure 1- Source: SIPRI

Israel is still not recognized by many countries in the international arena, i.e., the Arab world and some African and South Asian nations, including Pakistan. When Israel appeared on the world map in 1948, it didn't have relations with the broader global community. Even India didn't bother to develop any kind of relationship with Israel. This happened primarily due to two reasons: initially, Israel was a weak state with no political and economic significance in the world. Second, the entire Arab world was against Israel. Moreover, Russia had very close relations with the Muslim world at that time, and India didn't want to challenge the Muslim nations and lose the Russian recognition. Thus, Israel, with the assistance of the US and the West, fought three wars with the Arab states, i.e., 1948, 1967, and 1973.



With the passage of time, Israel started developing nuclear weapons covertly and became an undeclared, de facto nuclear weapon state in the late 1970s. Furthermore, the dissolution of the USSR forced the Indian side to search for alternatives and found Israel to be the best option. The first-ever visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to India was made in 2003 under the administration of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Israel is considered to be one of the largest arms exporters to India, with Israeli arms export exceeding \$185 million as of 2024. It was none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi who visited Israel in 2017. As a result, both states concluded the agreement of long-term strategic partnership, which conveyed a threat signal to Pakistan and the South Asian deterrence stability.

Indian procurements from Israel are comprised of a wide range of defense-offense equipments including surface-to-air missile systems, i.e., QR-SAM, Spyder SR/MR, advanced sniper rifles, i.e., Tavor Tar-21 and Galil rifles, Air-Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI) systems, Spice weapon systems, and radar technology, i.e., Long Range Tracking Radars (LRTRs). In the maritime domain, India has acquired some of the world's most sophisticated attack systems, including Barak-8, INFAC T-82, Dvora MK-II, and Ka-25 anti-submarine helicopters. The intersection of Indian and Israeli strategic thinking and their ever-growing strategic partnership is typically considered as centered around containing Pakistan in the region. If we critically link historical events to the current Indo-Israel partnership, we can easily create a pattern where Pakistan seemingly fits into the common enemy frame.

Starting in the early 1980s, when Pakistan was developing nuclear weapons covertly, Indian strategic thinking tried to dismantle the program with the help of Israel. According to official reports, Israel offered the Indian side to jointly denuclearize Pakistan. The basic reason behind it was Israel's concerns over the Muslim world's nuclearization and India's threat perception of holding and bearing another nuclear state in its neighborhood. The plan was to jointly strike Pakistan's Kahuta facility, but India was restrained from doing so due to increasing fears of instability and Pakistan's ambiguous stance over the development of nuclear weapons.

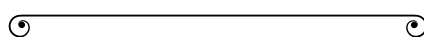
This was the first time when both India and Israel appeared to act jointly against Pakistan. Since then, there hasn't been any direct joint military offense, but the continuous Indian encroachments into Pakistani territory by using advanced Israeli-made weapon systems are clearly an instigation that, under the nuclear overhang, both India and Israel want to conventionally challenge Pakistan to destroy its key assets, leading to its economic losses. The 2019 Balakot Airstrike is its best manifestation, where Indian forces utilized and integrated the Israeli-made SPICE-2000 weapon systems integrated into the Mirage-2000 air jets. Moreover, India deployed the Israeli surface-to-air missile system 'SPYDER' to intercept drones from Pakistan.

As of May 2025, the post-Pahalgam terror attack witnessed a short but devastating conflict between India and Pakistan. Blaming Pakistan for the alleged terrorist attack, India launched Operation Sindoor against Pakistan. For the first time, South Asia witnessed drone warfare, where Indian forces launched a barrage of Israeli-made drones, including the Harop missile—a sophisticated suicidal drone. Major Indian intrusions included the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) procured from Israel. But the world witnessed something astonishing. This advanced Israeli technology was successfully intercepted and eliminated by Pakistan's Chinese-origin defense systems, i.e., HQ-9, etc.

Through these offenses, India became aware of the defensive capabilities and weak points of Pakistan. Soon after the skirmish, the Indian administration increased its engagements with Israel. As of July 2025, India is interested in procuring another Israeli-made long-range supersonic semi-ballistic missile, "LORA," which has a range of about 90-430 km. It's a 1600 kg missile with 'launch and forget' capability, which means that it can be maneuvered during its trajectory at any time. This missile system is capable of targeting bunkers, airbases, naval bases, and command centers. Despite having the supersonic BrahMos missile, it is showing willingness to procure another advanced Israeli 'LORA' missile system. The reason behind procurement of semi-ballistic missile system is to increase its offensive capabilities and once again conventionally challenge Pakistan, but this time with a more calculated attack.

DG ISPR General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has already stated, "India cannot deter, coerce, or make Pakistanis bow down through aggression." This statement explicitly clarifies that any kind of Indian conventional move in the near future would be dealt with a much greater response than ever. What does Pakistan have to do in this regard? Pakistan's triad forces must develop and enhance Multiple-Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs), make advancements in Babur and Raad missiles, improve their indigenous weapon development, procure modern and sophisticated aircraft, tanks, and UAVs from allies (i.e., China, Turkey, etc.), and develop robust intelligence sharing and training with the assistance of key allies. As of 2025, the government of Pakistan has successfully concluded a defense agreement with China to procure J-35A stealth fighter jets, ISR systems, and, most prominently, the HQ-19 missile defense system. These procurements are a direct response to Indian offensive moves, thus disturbing the status quo in the region. This is the only way to counter ever-growing Indian hegemonic designs in the region.

In essence, the international community must intrude to resolve this matter of concern. On one side, global institutions must call on Israeli leadership to refrain from declaring any offensive statement regarding the elimination of nuclear weapons from the Muslim world, while on the other side, recurring Indian conventional attacks on Pakistan must be eradicated, as it will only make both of the rivals closer to a devastating nuclear exchange. The South Asian stability now depends upon the future attitude of Indian strategic thinking. If India continues to pursue a similar policy, then the Pakistani side would have to take serious steps to neutralize any threat to its sovereignty and the regional security.



A COMMON FRONT: WHY PAKISTAN-LIBYA SECURITY TIES MATTER IN A FRAGMENTED REGION



Junaid Ashraf

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Following Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos Pakistan has attained world-wide recognition as an important strategic cooperation ally. Pakistan as an essential regional security interlocutor once again confirmed its dedication towards peace and development in the region. Libya's ultimate military commander Lt. Gen. Saddam Khalifa Haftar met with Pakistan's military chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at GHQ Rawalpindi to formally announce their intention to intensify security partnership and defense-industrial engagements alongside technical expertise sharing because of changing regional dynamics to combat current security issues. Libya experienced this symbolic progress amid its post-Qaddafi security vacuum situation that expanded while Pakistan launched itself into global security matters. This strategic partnership isn't new, as both had also cooperated during the Cold War when, in 1974's OIC summit in Lahore, then Libya's President called Pakistan "the fort of Islam" with supporting Pakistan's arms procurement efforts in the years following. The continued cooperation on labor, education, and political consultations remained in the post-Qaddafi period through a series of memoranda of understanding.



It's been more than a decade since Libya faced political upheaval after NATO backed an anti-Qaddafi rebellion during the Arab Spring of 2011. Since 2014, the country has been split into rival eastern and western factions, and it has been in a constant state of chaos marked by competing warlords, weak institutions, and a national army struggling to assert control. After multiple truces failed, the nation's precarious security situation became clear. Instability has been made worse by the attention that conflict-prone Libya has received from foreign powers such as Russia, Turkey, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, as it is a significant energy exporter and a major station for migrants traveling to Europe.

Pakistan's security cooperation dates back to participating in UN peacekeeping operations and assisting its allies with counterterrorism training. The defense industry of our Armed Forces has made notable progress while earning international recognition for its superior training capabilities, technical expertise, and discipline. The Pakistan-Libya strategic partnership must take immediate shape because North Africa's return to terrorist activities, together with arms trade conflicts among nations, demands effective, concerted security solutions.

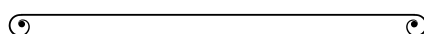
Moreover, Libya is located in North Africa and near the Mediterranean Sea; it will always serve as a crucial area of influence. Libya's Mediterranean location makes it a key hub for energy and geopolitics, attracting U.S. and Italian interest. The U.S. supports the UN-recognized National Oil Corporation (NOC) to protect Libya's 48 billion barrels of oil reserves. Companies such as ConocoPhillips and Occidental manage concessions in Libya's Waha to sustain global energy markets and further U.S. interests in North Africa. Meanwhile, Italy secures its gas supply through Eni's operations in fields like Bouri and Bahr Essalam, which have been active since the 1950s. Broader Western strategies, including collaboration between the U.S. and Italy, aim to preserve the autonomy of the NOC, reduce factional instability, ensure uninterrupted oil exports, and counter adversarial influences.

This strategic pairing would provide both nations with opportunities that place them in a win-win situation. Libya's fractured Army will get training, military organization, and institutional support from Pakistan's seasoned professional Army, which would help the Libyan Army to counter insurgency and achieve stability in the region. At the same time, Pakistan would leverage it to showcase its expanding defense industry, enhance its soft power in the Muslim world, and ultimately enhance its geopolitical footprint in North Africa. In brief South-South Collaboration becomes possible because states will develop defense partnerships that are self-reliant and cut back on their dependency on Western powers. This will help developing countries work together independently for their defense needs.

Regarding the basic security framework of North Africa regional security, Pakistan begins to establish its defense presence although Egypt and Turkey constitute major regional powers that actively follow Libyan destiny. The Libyan Army supported by Pakistan will have operational ability to combat terrorist groups in its territory and lower militia control and bring peace to North Africa. Pakistan becomes strategically vital to Arab regional security by strengthening its security partnership with Arab nations. Developing countries advance operational capabilities together through reciprocal help to reinvent security cooperation frameworks among Muslim nations threatened by similar challenges.

Opportunities come with associated risks. Because political sectarianism moves quickly in Libya the Pakistani government must carefully handle internal divisions to avoid mistakenly supporting the wrong faction. Because centralized command systems lack personal oversight training operations can generate abuse and arms shipments can lead to conflict escalations strong oversight is necessary. Because Pakistan chose diplomacy over military action and subsequently supported weapons instead of diplomatic solutions the country faces criticism. Opponents claim that Pakistan's military approach suppresses diplomatic efforts from the civilian side. Because it remains uncertain what kind of direction the country will take in future years.

The chief's meeting marks an important strategic realignment as Libya searches for partners on its western border and Pakistan eagerly wants to deliver technical support to the fragmented Libyan security system. Pakistan-Libya security collaboration presents a strategic window in hotspot region for peace advancement. An effective disaster prevention system must have distinctly defined long-term institutional objectives. To stop itself becoming a mere proxy for Libyan power rivalries inside the country Islamabad should build up the capacity of civil institutions alongside establishing real relations with the military command. The alliance might serve as an example for developing nations to regain stability through constructive reciprocal security partnerships when properly managed.



STRATEGIC SHADOWS: UNPACKING CHINA'S GREY ZONE TACTICS AGAINST THE WEST



Muhammad Ahmad Murtaza

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar, and currently pursuing Masters in IR & Diplomacy from Middlesex University, Dubai.

China, once the most revisionist power and clinging to its values and norms, is now sitting comfortably at the heart of the international system in the 21st century, dictating the order with an invisible hand. China had gone through a century of humiliation in the 19th century at the hands of the then imperial European powers, however, things have changed and it is now China who virtually edicts the rules of the business in international relations. “Grey zone” is not the term which China coined or is used for the first time. To put in context the current standing of China in the global order, we have to look at all aspects of its power projections, of which grey zone strategy is just the one spectrum. It has been consistent with China that it operates at sub-threshold levels and has never shown aggressive or pre-emptive nature in its foreign policy outlook since its modern history. China has emerged economically as a great power to reckon with along the United States (U.S.) and the European Union (EU). China has set its targets for modernization and military advancement for 2025, 2035, and 2049.

This contextual buildup will help understand the grey zone strategies of China. China does not want and cannot afford a direct military confrontation; therefore, it has concentrated its energies on this particular stratagem. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the financial tool of China which is somehow equivalent to the Bretton Woods system of the West. Grey zone strategies primarily refers to those methods and below threshold tactics which states employ to underscore strategic objectives without triggering wide scale response or escalation from other countries. As the world has progressed, so are the techniques of coercing the states. China has a stated policy to be the world’s greatest power by 2049. So, the grey zone lies between the conventional war-peace spectrum and China knows how to exploit it. Rapid modernization of the Chinese Army, Navy, and Air force is underway along with tools of modern warfare like cyber warfare and advanced drones. The Indo-Pacific region is the area of mutual interest of Beijing and Washington where both contest for dominance. Soft power and cultural diplomacy also somehow falls under this domain as China has set up the Confucius institutes almost everywhere it went. Additionally, China has not only outsmarted Europe in advanced industrial production but also in forward-looking living standards. China has uplifted its society both economically and technologically to be seen as an illustration of its governance and vision.

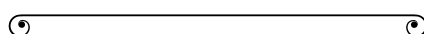
China has footholds in more than 150 countries across the world, where it is involved in infrastructural, industrial and technology related ventures. China has gained the reputation of a trusted partner and ally, which alleviates her stature in the World community. On the 10th anniversary of BRI in late 2023, more than 100 heads of states showed up in a remarkable meeting in Beijing. It is this Chinese sweeping dominance on supply-chains of rare-earth minerals, high-technology equipment, Electric Vehicles (EVs), and other advanced tools of economic growth which enables Beijing to strike deep into the West’s heart. There is hardly anything which is not manufactured in China. This is how China has become a strategic nightmare for the West, particularly for the U.S. who is surely not the rising power but also the dominant one. China’s consistent support of Russian war efforts in Ukraine has also stirred controversy; nevertheless it has shown its readiness to go to any lengths to stay relevant.



China's Liaoning Aircraft Carrier
Military Exercise at Bohai Sea, 2016

On April 4, 2025, Beijing baffled the world by carving out its own trade tariffs on high-priced rare earth minerals and advanced technology equipment. The world in general, Europe, and the United States in particular, were caught by surprise as to how China retaliated in response to U.S. provocation. China has time and again demonstrated its self-reliance and commitment to staying ahead of its competitors by internalizing the essential elements of the supply chain. Beijing has exposed the loopholes in the supply chains, which made the European and American markets vulnerable to any subtle variation in the global trade trends. The International system has been witnessing seismic shocks primarily due to the ongoing trade tussle between two economic giants. In this unprecedented situation, where states have multiple options at their disposal since the International political economy is interlinked and universalistic tariffs are not feasible. However, these events should not be seen in a vacuum as inter-state relations are often unpredictable, making it hard to foretell the long-term equations between nations. There might come a leader, or a systematic change that can unpick the political fabric of global order.

One domain where China slightly lags behind than its peers is advanced and sophisticated chip-making which is too technical to be discussed here. Similarly, western democracies can collaborate and come up with a resilient and macro-policy to counter China's strategic objectives if they want to catch up. However, the U.S. still wields tremendous smart power to pull things back. Till then, it is China who is leading with others finding their feet in the anarchic world community. China wants to make the statement that historically Taiwan was part of China so it will not give up on this. In this way, China delivers a quiet yet powerful response to the western world that the dragon is napping but well-aware of its surroundings and possessions.



BEYOND AUTOMATION: THE GREEN SIDE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)



Bakhtawar Raza

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar, and currently pursuing an MPhil in International Relations from the National Defence University, Islamabad.

As the world knows, AI and Automation are not new phenomena, but recent developments in technology are pushing forward boundaries of what machines can accomplish. These machines are able to do what humans are unable to. Human Intelligence has unleashed the new age of intelligence and information, where AI is set to reshape scientific discoveries, endeavours, industries, and human engagement. With these developments, human beings are entering the ‘Anthropocene’ age, in which activities of human beings have a significant influence on the environment. Our natural systems are changing at unprecedented rates, from Climate change to biodiversity, acidification to ocean warming, water and air pollution, and deforestation. In all these cases, less has been done to study these two futures (AI and Anthropocene) in parallel.

The lesser-known side of AI is the ‘Green Side of AI’. This side of AI highlights the power to combat climate change and ecological processes through different methods. From cooling energy systems to modernising agriculture, global supply chains to a sustainable economy model, restoring natural ecosystems to revolutionising climate AI, are helping humans in different ways. It is time for us to start seeing AI not just as a job disruptor but also as a climate change enabler.

AI is helping make energy systems efficient. The world is moving toward renewable energy, and AI is becoming a necessity in this sector. It helps in autonomous optimization, in which AI self-adjusts to maximize profitability and efficiency. AI has been proven to be more productive in terms of reliability and predictive accuracy at grid stations powered by solar and wind energies.



Moreover, the growing demand for energy sustainability and efficiency fulfilled by integrating AI-powered smarter grids brings a transformative opportunity in the energy sector. In 2016, Google Deep mind showed application of real world energy management scenario to world . This tech giant started working with powerhouses to optimise colling process with the help of AI. In Google's own data centre, DeepMind's AI reduced cooling costs by 40%.

In addition, AI is helping modernise and transform the agriculture sector by enabling more efficient, sustainable, and smarter farming practices across all production cycles. The traditional method of farming includes excessive usage of water, fertilizers, and pesticides, which results in damage to the environment and contributes to emissions. AI solves this by allowing farmers to tailor their use of water, fertilizers, and pesticides based on real-time data. It is revolutionizing the sector from product distribution to soil analysis. By using data taken from satellite sensors, soil sensors, and weather patterns, farmers apply just the right number of resources at the right time. This not only boosts crop yield but also reduces waste and environmental harm. In many parts of the Global South, such as Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, AI in agriculture is already improving food security and supporting small farmers in adapting to a changing climate.

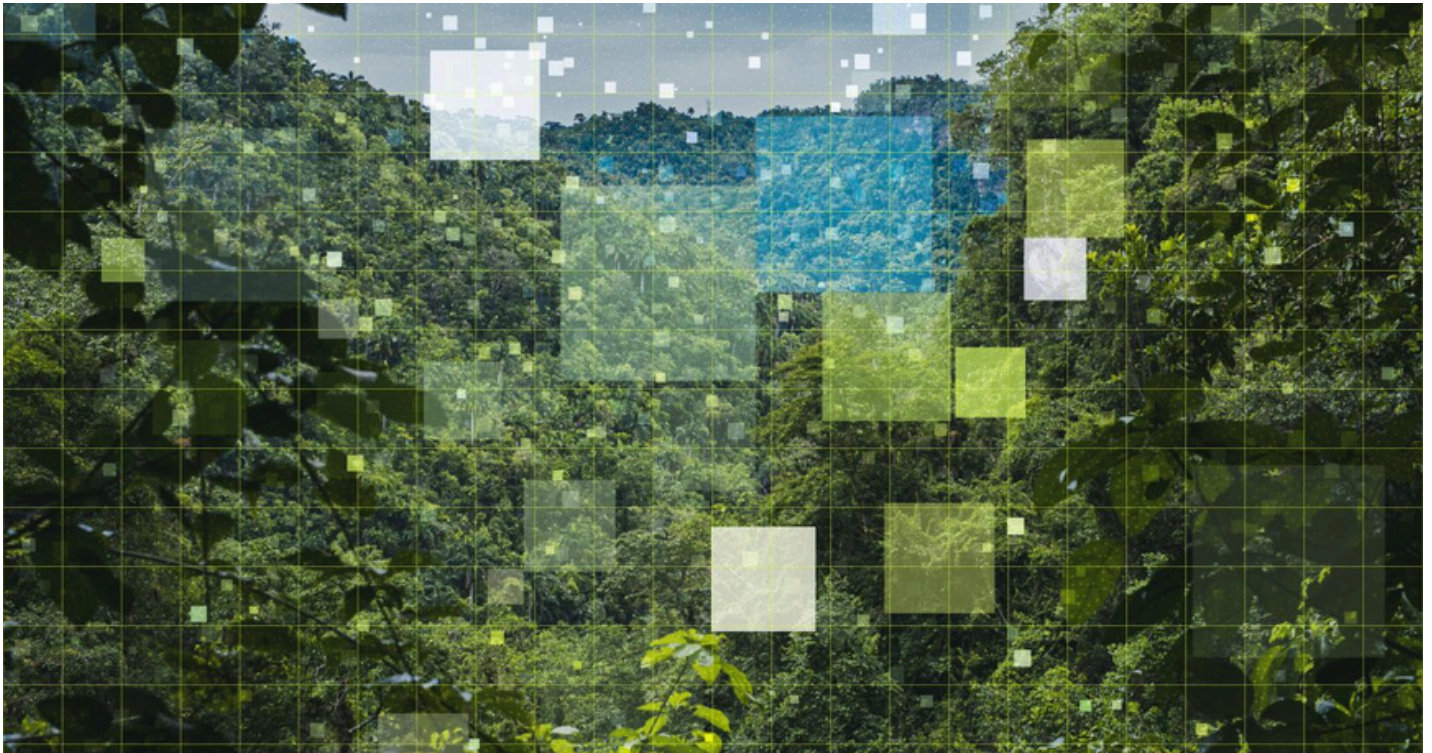
Turning to another area, AI is making global supply chains greener by improving how goods are produced, transported, and delivered. In the case of Inventory management, AI can optimise production and predict consumer demand, which results in less wastage. It also decreases excess production.

Furthermore, it helps in efficient logistics. In global supply chain, logistics and transport accounts for 25% of carbon emissions globally. AI can optimise logistics operations and transportation routes which can help in reducing emissions. AI helps in analysing different factors to optimise delivery routes such as weather conditions, traffic patterns and fuel efficiency through analysing data AI makes operations both cost effective and eco-friendly.

AI can also help in lifecycle analysis. It plays a critical role in shifting the economy toward a more sustainable model. It helps in shifting economy from 'take-make-dispose' model to circular economy. The traditional system of product creation resulted in generation of enormous waste. Companies use AI to assess the lifecycle of their products and with this they can identify areas and make improvements to reduce their environmental impact. This also helps businesses to extend the life of products, reduce water waste and create closed loop systems.

Moreover, AI plays a significant role in restoring the natural ecosystem by processing data collection and analysis. AI can help in restoring degraded environments such as wetlands, forests, and marine habitats through employing intelligent systems that process, collect and interpret large amounts of environmental data. In this process, drones, sensors, and satellites gather real-time data on various environmental parameters, and AI offers insights into specific needs and the most effective intervention.

These systems generated by AI also contribute to reducing human-wildlife conflicts; for example, some wind turbines now use AI to temporarily shut down when migratory birds are detected. It prevents harm to endangered species.



Besides this, AI is revolutionising climate change efforts across many domains. It optimises interconnected systems, such as transportation, power grids, land use, and urban infrastructure. It also helps develop new low-carbon technologies. The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts that nearly half of the emission reductions by 2025 will come from technologies that are not yet fully developed. It also improves policy modelling related to climate Change.

Furthermore, AI drives behavioural change by empowering consumers to make climate friendly choices through different interventions. Take example of Google maps eco-friendly routing which suggest routes that have less traffic, fewer hills and constant speed. This decreases the CO2 emissions annually.

Altogether, AI is emerging as a key driver of sustainability, but nothing has been done to bring AI and the Anthropocene age together. The World will not forget that we will have to face the impact of climate change first, and we are also the first to experience the rapidly changing digital world, human ingenuity, and automation. So it is important for us to not only transform industries, markets, and behaviours to undo the effects of climate change, but also work on a safe, positive, and responsible digital future. The green side of AI redefines its role from a simple tool of efficiency to a strategic partner in sustainable development. By combining AI's computational strength with human insight, we can create systems that are not only smarter but also more compassionate and aligned with the needs of the planet.



THE NEW YORK-FOR-PARIS DILEMMA



Muhammad Ibrahim

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the National Defence University, Islamabad.

The phrase “New York-for-Paris” dates to 1961, when France’s President Charles de Gaulle asked U.S. President John F. Kennedy if America would really be willing to trade New York for Paris if the Soviets attacked Europe. It encapsulates the age-old tension of extended deterrence: can a distant power credibly promise to risk itself for a friend? De Gaulle doubted Washington’s resolve, and Kennedy realized that any Western ally who doubted the U.S. would embolden an adversary. This credibility gap; what analyst Mariam Kvaratskhelia calls the New York-for-Paris Dilemma, arose from the mismatch between what Washington’s policy said it would do and what Americans were actually willing to do. In short, would the U.S. really trade its own cities for the defense of others?

After more than three years of war, Ukraine’s government is urgently seeking formal security guarantees as part of any ceasefire deal. President Zelenskiy told reporters on 19 August that his recent meetings in Washington had set the stage: “security guarantees will probably be...formalised on paper within the next week to 10 days,” he said. U.S. President Trump assured Zelenskiy that the United States would “help guarantee Ukraine’s security in any deal to end Russia’s war,” though he gave few details. Zelenskiy hailed this as a “major step forward,” noting that the U.S. would coordinate with other partners in a multilateral pledge.

But what would such guarantees look like? Zelenskiy has made clear he wants something “NATO-like” a collective-defense promise that would deter future attacks. He even pressed European officials to spell out exactly who would defend Ukraine: “We need clear answers; who will help us defend on the ground, in the air and at sea...define your role,” he has said. Importantly, he invokes the lesson of 1994: that year Ukraine gave up the world’s third-largest nuclear arsenal in the Budapest Memorandum, in exchange for U.S., UK, Russian (and others’) assurances. Those promises were never honored, as Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, and now Ukraine vows “we want legally binding security guarantees. We don’t want (another) Budapest Memorandum”. He says any pledge should be ratified by parliaments, just as a treaty would be; otherwise, it could end up “words on paper”.

In practice, Kyiv envisions guarantees including Ukraine’s continued access to advanced weapons (Zelenskiy mentioned a U.S. arms package of some \$90 billion, with planes and air defenses among them) and perhaps even allied forces or training on Ukrainian soil. Reports suggest 30 or more countries in a “coalition of the willing” could be involved. The key question remains open: would the United States or other allies ever actually fight for Ukraine? In Zelenskiy’s framing, this means persuading Europe and America to “see the architecture...how we see it” so that if Russia attacks again, Ukraine truly has friends who will act.

Washington’s response has been cautious. President Trump has reaffirmed U.S. support for Ukraine’s security, but he repeatedly rules out sending American troops. According to Reuters Trump told Zelenskiy that the U.S. “will be among the countries helping to coordinate” guarantees. Yet in interviews Trump has stressed that he will not put U.S. boots on Ukrainian soil and that Europeans must bear “most of the burden” of Ukraine’s

defense. U.S. planners are exploring options, but one clear limitation is Congress: Ukraine's leaders themselves note that any U.S. guarantee would likely require ratification to be credible.

In one plan under consideration, European troops could occupy Ukraine under a U.S.-led command-and-control, without wearing a NATO flag. In this scenario the U.S. would "help coordinate" a security umbrella (providing air support, logistics and surveillance), while allies supply the ground troops. Trump himself has hinted at this. On Fox News he said that "Europeans are willing to put people on the ground; we're willing to help them...especially by air". In other words, America's contribution would mainly be equipment and perhaps limited air defense or fighter cover (a proposed "sky shield"), not combat brigades on the front lines.

In Europe, leaders are shifting into higher gear. EU and NATO countries held talks in August under U.S. auspices, and the European Commission's Ursula von der Leyen told the Financial Times that EU capitals were drawing up "pretty precise plans" for tens of thousands of European troops to deploy in Ukraine after a ceasefire. Von der Leyen said President Trump "reassured us that there will be an American presence as part of the backstop" for this EU force. The Guardian notes that the UK and France have offered to send forces, calling it a "reassurance" deployment, while Germany has been more skeptical. Even as Trump speaks of a U.S.-backed European mission, EU defense ministers have agreed to train Ukrainian soldiers on Ukrainian soil after a truce. The emerging "package" looks like a coalition of Western powers; led by Europeans on the ground and supported by U.S. systems, rather than a simple bilateral U.S. pledge.



Any of these bumps into Moscow's nonnegotiable demands. The Kremlin flatly rejects Western military forces in Ukraine. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that even a "European peacekeeping" force would be seen as an unacceptable NATO presence in Ukraine. He insists Russia "will not allow" NATO infrastructure or Western troops on its neighbour's soil, calling that a root cause of the war. According to Atlantic Council experts, Moscow envisions security guarantees that effectively bar Ukraine from NATO forever and force it to hand over occupied regions. A peace deal under Russian terms would commit Ukraine to neutrality

(no NATO), demilitarization, and territorial concessions. In Putin's view, Russia should itself have a key say as a guarantor, while Western forces are explicitly outlawed. Putin's envoys are "categorically opposed to western troops in Ukraine" and "unlikely to accept a peacekeeping force" as part of any deal. In short, Russia has cast the question as a choice between Ukrainian neutrality with Russian backing, or continued war if the West insists on a military presence.

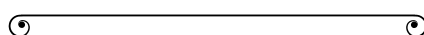
This brings us back to the core dilemma: can Western promises be both credible and acceptable? A formal U.S. or NATO treaty to defend Ukraine would have to "draw on Article 5" language and likely be backed by legislators. Without explicit commitments, analysts warn, Putin might dismiss the pledge as a "paper tiger". Any military guarantee really depends on political will: even Article 5 says each ally "will assist" as it sees fit. In practice, a battle over Ukraine might well first be decided in Warsaw, Paris or Washington by politicians or polls, not generals.

Given these risks, many experts argue that the best deterrent is Ukraine's own strength and a cohesive Western support system, not an open-ended U.S. pledge. Continuing to supply Ukraine with advanced weapons and building its industry; along with intelligence and air-defense support may be wiser than overcommitting American troops. The guarantee is credible if the defender truly "means it" with hard power behind the words. The United States has already delivered billions in arms to Kyiv; now Congress and the public must consider whether to enshrine a guarantee that would, in theory, demand a U.S. military response if Russia strikes again.

In that calculus, history looms large. Ukraine was down to 1,000 nuclear weapons in 1994; it traded them for "assurances" that, as Zelenskiy notes, ultimately failed. The fear is that without a tangible "tripwire" (troops, missiles, bases), any new guarantee could unravel. NATO's European members also feel exposed. Even among a "coalition of the willing," few European armies are ready to put boots in Ukraine without a clear U.S. backstop. Germany and others will not commit forces unless they trust that Washington will "stare down Putin" if things get ugly.

Practically, a middle ground is developing. The EU and NATO are approaching the defense of Ukraine as a joint venture; training more, exchanging air-defense equipment, and developing a concept of a multinational force. The U.S. has made clear that it will support such moves but is not leading: Trump has repeatedly said that the U.S. would help Ukraine with an armada of equipment but leave the front lines to Europe. This layered approach; strong Ukrainian armed forces underwritten by a West that includes but does not front-line for the U.S., seems designed to manage the NY-for-Paris risk.

The lesson of New York-for-Paris is that, unless allies can credibly commit to the use of force against attackers, they need to resort to other factors of deterrence. For Ukraine, a total U.S. security commitment is the strongest possible commitment, but still risks being hollow if it is ever put to the test and the American people or politicians reject it. Ultimately, the only thing that can guarantee Ukraine is the might of its own army and the solidarity of its friends, not one magic treaty in which one partner sacrifices a city for another.



NUCLEAR DETERRENCE: A FACTOR OF PEACE OR THREAT IN SOUTH ASIA



Tania Hussain

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Is nuclear security one of the main security concerns in the 21st century? This is a significant question that draws the world's attention towards the nuclear domain. The world has been facing various challenges with regard to nuclear security as the capabilities of nuclear states to make advanced nuclear weapons and to use them is one of the major threats to regional and global security.

South Asia is the region which comprises of two historical nuclear rival states, despite many efforts by the global world to keep the region deprived of the nuclear capabilities; Pakistan and India succeeded in becoming nuclear states and surprised the world with their nuclear declarations when the world was making efforts for non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons for ensuring the sustainable measures in the world. India's nuclear test with the name of Smiling Buddha in 1974 was met with Pakistan declaration of nuclear power in 1998 and from there began the deterrence efforts of these states in the region to counter each other's nuclear advancements.

The deterrence factor has been in question in South Asia multiple times whether it is a factor for maintenance of peace in the region or is it a factor of continuous threat to the security of the entire region. The glimpse of the history proves that the deterrence factor has remained more a factor of peace so far and it can be justified by analyzing the conflicts between these two states which suggests that because of the deterrence capabilities both of the states have avoided full scale invasion on one another and instead have responded to each other aggressive behavior with retaliations without sidelining the deterrence factor. The small skirmishes and even Kargil conflict of 1999 shows that none of the states has dared to call on a full fledged war as it would only end up in having serious consequences to be faced not only by the single state but by both of the states and in fact by the entire region in the form of the suffering to the humans, the destruction of the infrastructure and the unbearable consequences to be faced by the next generation. It is assumed that if deterrence is not maintained as a factor of stability then there would be catastrophic consequences risking the survival of both of the states.

The deterrence factor between these two states is considered as one of the significant factors behind the continued peace in the region so far. However, most analysts and critics believe that deterrence is not the solution to the rivalry between these two states, nor does it ensure the security of the region as the events such as the recent Pahalgam attack happens because of the backing of the proxies in the conflicts based on the over confidence of the two states in their respective nuclear capabilities, thus making the geopolitics more complicated to comprehend and risks the stability of the entire region.

This shows that deterrence still cannot be categorized either as a helpful factor or a dangerous factor. The world powers couldn't succeed in preventing these states in becoming nuclear power because of their own interest during cold war and their biasness during that era which resulted in the nuclearizing the region and till today these two neighboring states who could enjoy friendly relations because of the rich and connected history through diplomacy and cooperation have not come out of their grievances and still have been

participating in arm race with the aim of deterring each other through advanced nuclear weapons and have been participating in proxy wars to gain various regional interests. These proxy wars are one of the major concerns in South Asia and pose risks to the security of the region.

These two states have been on their paths of accomplishing dominance in their nuclear capabilities by making technological advancements and evolving the methods of warfare by attaining technological advanced nuclear weapons besides the development of conventional ones in order to serve their regional interests.

The nuclear arm race to gain national interests in the name of deterrence by these states cannot be justified as an effective way to ensure each other's security and cannot be of any significance for either of the states as it will only leave the states empty handed because of the destabilization of the entire region and here it is imperative to mention that India by becoming second largest arms importer in the world by the support of other nuclear powers such as Russia, France, China and Israel is continuously trying to create its hegemony within the region for becoming a great power the region.

In short until now this nuclear deterrence has remained an important factor behind the stability of the region despite the counter assumptions towards its alternative consequences as it has been tested in the recent conflict of Pahalgam where the leadership and the involvement of external powers prevented the two states from entering into nuclear war but in order to ensure lasting peace it is imperative that these states take into consideration the stability of the region and this can only be achieved when these states avoid involving in arms race in the name of deterrence and instead of that should make efforts to promote peace and diplomacy between each other and should make bilateral efforts for practicing deterrence with the ambition of stability of the region instead of using this factor for national ambitions .



Weaponizing the Feed: How Social Media Became a Battleground of Modern Politics



Alam Nawaz

The author is a research scholar and Strategic Studies graduate from the NDU, Islamabad, and currently serves as Research Coordinator at Global Stratagem Insight.

Social media warfare is the use of social media platforms as a weapon to manipulate public opinion, spread false or misleading information, mobilize supporters, and undermine adversaries. It can be used by states, non-state actors, or individuals for various political, economic, social, or cultural agendas. Social media warfare poses a challenge to international law, as it often violates the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and human rights. For example, social media warfare can interfere with the internal affairs of other states, influence the outcome of elections, incite violence or terrorism, or harm the reputation and dignity of individuals or groups.

International law can provide a framework for regulating and responding to social media warfare by establishing norms and rules for the responsible use of social media, protecting the rights and interests of victims, and holding perpetrators accountable. For example, international law can apply existing treaties and conventions on cybercrime, cyberwarfare, human rights, and humanitarian law to the context of social media warfare. Moreover, International law can also promote cooperation and dialogue among states and other stakeholders to prevent and resolve conflicts arising from social media warfare by creating platforms and mechanisms for information sharing, confidence-building, dispute settlement, and collective action. For instance, international law can support the role of the United Nations, regional organizations, and civil society in addressing the challenges and opportunities of social media warfare.

Conceptualizing the Militarization of Social Media through “PSYPOS” Framework

The PSYPOS framework, which stands for platform, strategy, yield, power, opposition, and society, is a conceptual tool that helps to understand and explain how and why social media is militarized by different actors and groups, and what are the implications and challenges for policy makers and the public. The framework was developed by Dr. Waseem Ahmed Qureshi a researcher and consultant on social media and security issues. The platform refers to the type, features, and functions of the social media platforms and applications that are used by the actors and groups to militarize social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. The platform determines the possibilities and limitations of the content, communication, and interaction that can take place on social media, and how they can be exploited or manipulated by the actors and groups, while the Strategy focuses on the goals, methods, and tactics employed by actors, such as propaganda and recruitment, to achieve their objectives. And it yields the outcomes and impacts of social media militarization, measuring success through effects on awareness, engagement, and support. Finally, the “Power, Opposition, and Society” unpacks the sources and dynamics of power, challenges faced by actors, and broader societal implications arising from social media militarization.

Outcomes and impacts of social media militarization

Social media militarization is the use of social media platforms to promote, justify, or celebrate militarism and political violence. It can have various outcomes and impacts, such as:

- It can influence public opinion and behaviour, by shaping the narratives and perceptions of war, security, and identity. It can also create a sense of participation, belonging, or empowerment for some users, or a sense of fear, alienation, or resentment for others.
- It can affect the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts, by providing information, communication, and coordination for actors involved in violence. It can also create opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and peacebuilding, or escalate tensions, hostility, and violence.
- It can challenge or reinforce the norms and rules of international relations, by exposing or concealing the realities and consequences of political violence. It can also create new forms of accountability, responsibility, and legitimacy, or undermine existing ones.

Power Dynamics and Societal Implications

The militarization of social media can have various outcomes and impacts at the individual and societal levels, depending on the actors, audiences, and contexts involved. This article focuses on three examples of actors that engage in social media militarization: the arms and military services industry, the military videogames industry, and the Islamic State group. The arms and military services industry is one of the most powerful and influential sectors in the world, with a global market value of over \$1.9 trillion in 2020. This industry uses social media as a tool to shape the global arms trade and influence security narratives. For example, it uses social media to advertise and showcase its products and services, to lobby and persuade governments and policymakers, and to cultivate and maintain relationships with customers and partners. It also uses social media to frame and justify its role in providing security and stability, to counter and discredit critics and opponents, and to promote and normalize a culture of militarism and violence.



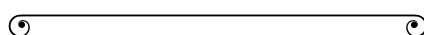
In addition, the military videogames industry is another actor that exercises power through social media militarization. This industry is a lucrative and popular segment of the global entertainment market, with revenues of over \$35 billion in 2020. It uses social media to impact gaming cultures and communities by creating and distributing military-themed games, engaging with gamers and fans, and fostering and facilitating online gaming networks and platforms. It also uses social media to shape and manipulate the representations and perceptions of war, violence, and identity, by exploiting and reinforcing stereotypes and myths, by blurring and distorting the boundaries between reality and fiction, and by encouraging and rewarding aggression and competition. Furthermore, the Islamic State group is a third example of an actor that deploys power through social media militarization. This group is a radical Islamist organization that aims to establish a global caliphate and wage jihad against its enemies. It uses social media to challenge state authority and spread radical ideologies by disseminating and amplifying its propaganda and messages, by recruiting and radicalizing supporters and followers, and by coordinating and executing attacks and operations. It also uses social media to create and maintain its identity and legitimacy, by projecting and asserting its strength and dominance, through demonstrating and glorifying its brutality and violence and by appealing and responding to its audience's grievances and aspirations.

Beyond the individual impacts of these actors, the militarization of social media also influences societal values, norms, and identities, and raises ethical and moral dilemmas. For example, it can affect how people understand and relate to war and violence, how they perceive and interact with others, and how they express and perform their own identities. It can also pose questions about the responsibility and accountability of social media users, platforms, and regulators, the protection and promotion of human rights and dignity, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts and violence. These issues require careful and critical analysis from multiple perspectives and disciplines, as well as dialogue and cooperation among various stakeholders.

To address the challenges and opportunities of social media warfare, analysts recommend the following actions:

- Adopt a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach that considers the multiple dimensions and drivers of social media warfare, and that integrates insights from media studies, sociology, psychology, and political science.
- Engage and empower diverse stakeholders and voices in the social media warfare debate and decision-making, such as the social media platforms, the military and security agencies, the civil society organizations, and the public.
- Address the root causes and consequences of violence and conflict, and pursue peaceful and political solutions, rather than relying on military and technological means.

Social media warfare is a complex and evolving phenomenon that requires careful and critical analysis from multiple perspectives and disciplines, as well as dialogue and cooperation among various stakeholders. By taking these actions, we can prevent and resolve conflicts, promote dialogue and cooperation, and build a more peaceful and prosperous world.



TRANSITION TO GREEN TECHNOLOGY: A PATHWAY TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Ayesha Syed

The author is an intern of GSI, a research scholar, and currently pursuing MPhil in International Relations at the University of Karachi.

Has the Climate been adversely impacted, or can technology be eco-friendly?

The world is at a crossroads. From devastating floods in Pakistan, high risk of cyclones in Bangladesh, extreme weather events in India to record-breaking heat waves in Europe, the climate crisis is no longer a distant threat it is a lived reality for millions. As global temperatures rise and natural disasters become more frequent, it is clear that our current economic and energy systems are unsustainable. The solution lies not in temporary fixes but in bold transformative action, starting with a decisive transition to green technology.

Green technology refers to any innovation that does not harm or negatively impact the Earth's environment throughout the process of supply, manufacturing, use, and disposal. While electric cars, solar panels, and LED light bulbs are often cited as examples, it raises an important question: are they genuinely eco-friendly?

Green technology can also be simple, like planting trees or designing buildings with well-placed windows to save energy and reduce heat loss during cold months. Water can be collected, cleaned, and reused, and gray water can be filtered using natural methods like permaculture. Another example is vertical gardens, also called vertical farming, where plants are grown in stacked layers. This is useful in places with limited space or poor soil. When built inside greenhouses or large buildings, vertical gardens can grow food for a longer season, use less water than regular farming, and also look green and beautiful.



Some of the most promising green technologies that are safe for the environment in how they are made and used include water conservation, water purification, and restoring wetlands to help clean water naturally. Other examples are using biodegradable water filters, saving energy by using it more efficiently, and following the "reduce, reuse, recycle" approach. Cutting down on single-use plastics and plastic bags is also important. In building design, green practices include aiming for net zero waste, using passive solar energy, and designing for natural heating and cooling to reduce energy use.

Climate change is no longer a future problem it's happening now. Heatwaves, floods, droughts, and rising sea levels are affecting millions of lives across the world. These disasters are made worse by our continued use of fossil fuels and unsustainable development. To protect our planet and future generations, we need urgent change. Shifting to green technology is a key step in reducing harm, adapting to new challenges, and creating a cleaner, safer world.

Green technology is more than just a tool for cutting carbon emissions, it is a critical pathway to building stronger, more resilient societies. By adopting clean energy, sustainable practices, and eco-friendly innovations, we can reduce our dependence on harmful fossil fuels and prepare communities to face climate challenges. Green technology offers long-term benefits not only for the environment but also for economies and public health. It is a key solution for achieving both climate resilience and sustainable development in the years ahead.

1. Economic Benefits

Shifting to green technology can boost the economy by creating new jobs in sectors like renewable energy, clean transportation, and sustainable farming. Solar panel technicians, wind turbine operators, and environmental engineers are in high demand globally. Many countries are now investing in these areas not just to fight climate change, but to fuel economic growth and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels. Green innovation also opens up space for startups and businesses to grow around cleaner and smarter solutions.

In countries like Pakistan and India, the shift to green technology is opening up new job markets and reducing energy insecurity. Pakistan's Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park in Punjab has created employment opportunities while helping to add clean energy to the national grid. Similarly, India's booming solar sector has employed over 160,000 workers and continues to grow. By investing in renewable energy, these countries are not only reducing their fuel import bills but also creating local economic opportunities and encouraging innovation in green industries.

2. Climate Resilience

Green technology strengthens our ability to deal with climate disasters. Renewable energy like solar and wind makes us less dependent on fossil fuels, which are both harmful and unstable in supply. For example, installing solar panels in remote areas can keep the power running during floods or storms. Climate-smart agriculture, efficient water use, and clean public transport can help cities and rural areas adapt better to the changing climate and avoid long-term damage.

Bangladesh, one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, has become a global example of building climate resilience through green technology. The country has installed over 6 million solar home systems in rural areas, providing reliable electricity even during cyclones and floods. These systems reduce dependency on fragile grids and diesel generators, allowing communities to adapt better to natural disasters and protect essential services like health clinics and schools during emergencies.



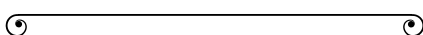
3. Social Justice and Equity

A just green transition can reduce inequality. Poor and vulnerable communities often suffer the most from pollution, heatwaves, and water shortages. Green solutions like solar power in off-grid villages or clean cooking stoves can improve health, reduce costs, and bring better opportunities. If planned fairly, the transition can uplift marginalized groups by giving them access to clean energy, training for green jobs, and a healthier environment to live in.

In rural Kenya, clean cook stove programs have helped reduce indoor air pollution, benefiting women and children the most. These technologies also cut down firewood use, easing the burden on forests and on women who collect fuel. In Pakistan, solar energy projects in off-grid areas of Sindh and Balochistan have brought electricity to villages for the first time. This has improved education, healthcare access, and women's mobility showing how green solutions can promote fairness and lift up undeserved communities.

However, the transition is not without challenges. Upfront costs, lack of infrastructure, and technological gaps often hold back large-scale adoption. This is where international cooperation, technology transfer, and climate finance become critical. The developed world must fulfill its climate commitments financially and technologically to support developing nations in making this shift. The recent surge in climate pledges must be matched with real investments and policy support.

The transition to green technology must be just and inclusive, ensuring that workers in fossil fuel industries are reskilled and vulnerable communities are protected from the socio-economic shocks of change. It should not deepen inequality but serve as a tool for empowerment. For this to happen, policymakers, private sectors, and civil society must collaborate to scale up climate-smart solutions, improve regulatory systems, and foster innovation. Educational institutions must prepare the next generation of climate leaders, while citizens adopt sustainable habits in daily life. The choices we make today will shape the future of our planet this transition is not only an environmental necessity but a moral, social, and economic responsibility. We stand at a critical point: continue on a path of ecological collapse or invest in a green, just, and resilient future. The time to act is now.



NEW WORLD ORDER: CONSPIRACY OR REALITY?



Shazmeen Soomro

The author is an intern of GSI and research scholar of International Relations at DHA Suffa University.

The 'New World Order' is a concept that has been discussed for decades in both academic debate and conspiratorial discourse. The concept gained prominence after the speech made by President George H.W. Bush in 1990 to Congress, in which he envisioned a post-Cold War world marked by cooperation under American leadership. According to Bush, the U.S. power, which is exercised with the help of institutions such as the United Nations, can contribute to global stability and democratic values. It was this vision that appeared to be confirmed by the Gulf War conducted by a wide international coalition, as it demonstrated that the unipolar world could achieve quick and decisive outcomes. Nevertheless, the fact that it was easy to win might have led to overconfidence. Subsequent operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria highlight the insufficiency of U.S. unilateralism and the continued presence of regional powers unwilling to be dominated. These experiences demonstrate how the New World Order's idealized vision differs from the reality of international politics.

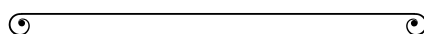
The global system is increasingly multipolar with power spread among various states and regions. The increasing economic and military strength of China, reflected by its 2025 military parade in Beijing attended by Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un is a sign that a bloc is rising that can compete with U.S. influence. Through its strategic assertiveness, Russia has presented a challenge to Western security assumptions, especially in Europe and the Middle East, even though the country is economically constrained. Meanwhile, the Global South countries, like India, Brazil, and Indonesia, exercise significant autonomy, seeking alliances and trade relations for safeguarding national interests instead of aligning with the major powers strictly. The concept of one hegemon that defines international order seems to be becoming outdated in this multiplex world. While the U.S. retains technological and military advantages, other states exercise agency that prevents the replication of the Bush-era vision of unipolarity.

These shifts have significant implications for the stability of the region. Although theories of a modern New World Order may be overstated, there is no doubt that foreign agency tends to overlap with national weaknesses in underdeveloped or developing countries. External influence tends to overlap with domestic vulnerabilities in fragile or transitional states. A case in point is the political crises in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh, whereby internal turmoil is taken advantage of by regional powers to serve strategic interests. Similarly, the conflicts in the Middle East, such as in Iraq and Gaza, show the weaknesses of international governance rules when national interests clash. The debates over the so-called Greater Israel idea also help to emphasize that the local territorial objectives may collide with global strategic calculations, sometimes contributing to the instability. The concept, which may be overstated in certain discourses, still has an active role in U.S. foreign policy determinations and regional associations in the Middle East. Equally significant is the Saudi-Pakistan military alliance that indicates the potential of a new Middle Eastern-South Asian bloc. The possible inclusion of countries like the UAE or Qatar into this arrangement would not only be a form of cooperation in the region but also a possible threat to the Western-led security frameworks. These alliances point to the fact that regional actors in the multipolar order are no longer the followers of the great powers but initiators of regional security structures that are indicative of their priorities.

In the current U.S. policy under Donald Trump, one can see the difficulty in shaping these dynamics through traditional hegemony. His stated goal of “un-uniting” Russia and China, inspired by a “reverse Kissinger” analogy, reflects the allure of historical parallels. Nevertheless, Russia and China are having a fairly steady alliance as opposed to the opening by Nixon to China in 1972, the two countries have integrated military drills, economic activity, and a mutual criticism of Western liberalism. Any efforts to manipulate this relationship by exploiting the divides in it are bound to fail and their efforts may even strengthen regional blocs opposed to U.S. influence.

Moreover, the emergence of China as well as the consolidation of the axis of upheaval involving Russia, North Korea, and other powers proves that multipolarity is becoming more and more characteristic of international politics. Although the U.S. hegemony is still a potent force, it cannot dictate the global outcomes. The current system is characterised by conflicts of interest, strategic readjustments, and complicated interdependencies instead of one single unifying agenda.

Finally, the New World Order is not to be interpreted as a blueprint of conspiracies but the framework for analyzing global power shifts. The Hegemonic coordination promise of utopia provided by the U.S leadership has been tested because of the resurgence of multipolarity and regional autonomy. Future conflicts, whether in South Asia, East Asia, or the Middle East, are likely to reflect these structural shifts rather than the orchestration of a singular global plan. Addressing these challenges requires engagement with emerging regional powers, recognition of competing interests, and a realistic understanding of the limits of unilateral influence. Only by embracing multipolar cooperation and inclusive diplomacy can the international community hope to achieve stability, reduce conflict, and manage the complexities of a fragmented world order.





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PAPERS



PAKISTAN'S ROAD TO MILITARY CREDIBILITY IN MAY 2025 CONFLICT: ROLE OF COGNITIVE AND NARRATIVE WARFARE



Muhtasim Afridi

The author is a research scholar, currently pursuing an MPhil in Strategic Studies from the National Defence University, Islamabad.

Abstract

In contemporary times, the character of war has transformed from conventional war practices into network-centric and cognitive domains, where information and perception play decisive roles. This research highlights the strategic interactions between India and Pakistan, with a particular focus on how both states employ narratives and information operations in conjunction with their military postures. It analyses the May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan, with a slight reference to the Cold Start Doctrine and the 2019 Balakot crisis. The research explores Pakistan's efforts to counter disinformation and restore military credibility through coordinated narrative. It concludes that in contemporary times, building military credibility requires synchronization of kinetic tactics with cognitive and narrative domains.

Keywords: Military Credibility, Non-kinetic Tactics, Cognitive and Narrative Warfare, New Concept of War Fighting

Introduction

In modern warfare, the outcomes of battles are no longer determined solely by firepower, but by the stories nations tell and the narratives they shape. The May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan underscored this reality, where both sides employed information tactics in conjunction with hard power. Over the last twenty-five years, several terrorist incidents took place, including the 2001 attacks on the Indian parliament, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the 2016 Pathankot and Uri attacks, and the 2019 Pulwama incident. As it happens, each terrorist incident replicated the same escalation pattern. Initially, a terrorist event unfolds either in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) or in mainland India and is promptly attributed to Pakistan without compelling evidence. Secondly, the Indian media, opposition, and the public pressurise New Delhi to respond. Thirdly, diplomatic tensions rise, including the expulsion of diplomats. Fourthly, military posturing intensifies, and the conflict advances to higher rungs, involving incidents at certain points. Lastly, followed by mediation and de-escalation, but fostering deepened mistrust in the long run.

It is déjà vu all over again. In the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack on 22nd April 2025, the two South Asian neighbours observed a similar pattern – cutting off trade and diplomatic relations, followed by a heated exchange of security threats and ultimately military engagement. Initially, responsibility for the attack was claimed (but later retracted on 26th April) by The Resistant Front (TRF), a group fighting for the secession of Kashmir from India. Despite Pakistan's proposal for a joint investigation into the incident, New Delhi accused the Pakistani leadership of conspiring with the perpetrators. However, given the deployment of a large number of Indian troops in the IOJK, many critics in New Delhi pointed fingers toward the Indian leadership.

As the crisis stretched, India planned to launch a military operation dubbed Operation Sindoor on 7th May 2025 against the alleged terrorist sites of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a suspected backer of the TRF (according to

New Delhi). The operation was largely criticised by the Pakistani leadership, media, and academic community, where many believed it resembled a false-flag operation to gain political support because the Modi-led Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) took hasty decisions, i.e., immediately suspended the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) and escalated to higher rungs of the conflict without considering a nuclear inquiry. However, a military operation was expected by the Pakistani leadership, especially when PM Modi sat at the centre of New Delhi. The February 2019 Pulwama Attack was blamed on Pakistan without evidence. Subsequently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out airstrikes in Balakot, which resulted in an unintended outcome when Pakistan responded and captured one of the Indian pilots during Operation Swift Retort. In the May 2025 conflict, again, India faced mortification with the loss of six fighter jets against the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and received severe damage to its military installations. Despite running a disinformation campaign, the Modi administration is caught at a crossroads: address condemnation at home or compete on the diplomatic front as it faces international humiliation?

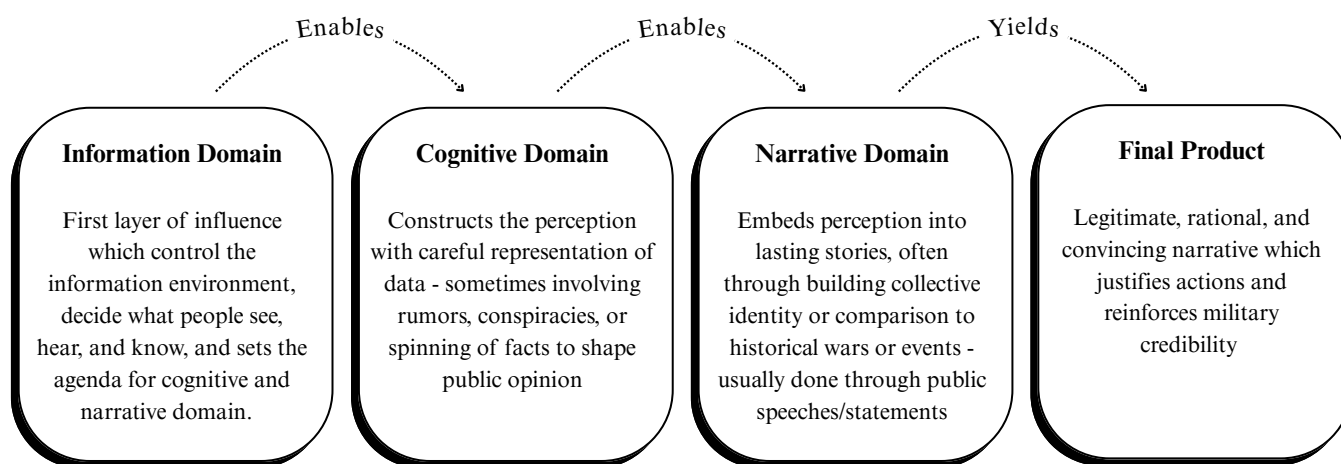
The blame game against Pakistan is a common strategy deeply embedded in the Indian leadership because the anti-Pakistan narrative helps gain popularity in India. Nevertheless, if a narrative has a weak foundation, it can yield results contrary to what is envisioned. This paper addresses three important aspects. First, the evolving character of information warfare. Second, India's consistent efforts to undermine Pakistan's conventional and nuclear capabilities. Third, the role of cognitive and narrative warfare in restoring Pakistan's military credibility in the May 2025 conflict.

Conceptual and Doctrinal Foundations

Traditionally, militaries were focused on instilling 'fear' in people's minds, which worked as a tool to ensure obedience to the state. In wars, particularly World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, belligerents employed means such as posters, pamphlets, newspapers, radio, and state-run broadcasts to influence the enemy's decision-making and bolster their narrative at home. But the element of fear had certain limitations; it only caused short-term compliance and was unsustainable. Also, previously, states had a certain level of control over the data people consumed because the information cycle was slow. However, today, each individual has access to the major social media platforms, including X, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, where a large audience consumes information without state-controlled content filtering. This shift in the means of communication has made the information flow instant, decentralised, and global, hence more difficult to regulate.

Given that, the strategy is now shifting towards 'persuasion,' where people feel they are choosing one fact or another voluntarily rather than being forced, thus more impactful and sustainable than instilling fear. Here comes the role of cognitive and narrative warfare, which are components of fifth-generation warfare that rely primarily on non-kinetic means, including information and psychological operations. Cognitive warfare consists of two dimensions: offensive and defensive; the former aims to shape and manipulate how an adversary, its population, decision-makers, and institutions think by employing tactics such as disinformation, deepfakes, and message swarming, while the latter aims to defend one's own population, institutions, and decision-makers against those tactics. Under the cognitive framework, narrative warfare concerns the legitimacy of a specific action and its rational justification, involving fact-based rebuttal of mis/disinformation via credible state messaging. Both cognitive and narrative warfare aim to influence the target audience; however, the former is broader, serving as a comprehensive toolbox, while the latter is limited to the stories people remember about a specific event, such as who won and lost the war.

Conceptual Relationships



* Fig. 01: Compiled by the author

The above figure indicates that the cognitive domain is a component of the information domain, serving as an umbrella framework within which the narrative domain operates as a central bridge through which a narrative is conveyed to both domestic and international audiences. One of its early applications was demonstrated by Russia in the 2014 Crimean annexation; however, it was limited in scope; the target audience was Russian citizens and the Russian-speaking population in Crimea. Today, the focus is on global perception management and long-term influence. However, if this approach is mismanaged, i.e., lacking credible information or contradictory in nature, the adversary gets the opportunity to exploit those gaps and push their own version, which ultimately weakens one's credibility. Many strategists are yet to realise its importance; however, as stated by Bernard Claverie and François du Cluzel:

“Cognitive warfare has taken hold. The core challenge is that it is essentially invisible; all you see is its impact, and by then ... it is often too late.”

Given that, Indian doctrine incorporates cognitive and narrative warfare as vital rudiments in its broader strategic approach, predominantly concerning its animosity with Pakistan. This includes employing information warfare to control perceptions and achieve political objectives, frequently in conjunction with conventional military and diplomatic efforts. Due to India's hybrid war tactics, Pakistan too has evolved to consider cognitive and narrative warfare as crucial constituents of its military doctrine. Although it is built on limited grounds, the state has both traditional and digital/social media platforms to control the information space. This invisible warfare was previously viewed as insignificant; however, it is now an essential component in achieving military credibility. At the culmination of conflict, it is the credible, convincing, and legitimate narrative that is accepted by domestic and international audiences.

Indo-Pak Dynamics in the 21st Century

Having understood the concept, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of India-Pakistan in the 21st century to establish the context:

The Cold Start Doctrine and Pakistan's Retaliatory Measures

Since India adopted the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) in 2004, the state has consistently tried to create a space for limited war against Pakistan under the nuclear overhang. However, Pakistan adopted two strategic

measures to decrease the effectiveness of the CSD. First, the introduction of a multi-domain warfighting strategy called the New Concept of War Fighting (NCWF) at the conclusion of military exercises codenamed Azm-e-Nau (conducted between 2009 and 2013).

Table 1: New Concept of War Fighting – Pakistan’s Multi-domain Warfighting Strategy

Air	Land	Sea	Space	Cyber	Electromagnetic Spectrum
Traditional aircraft-based missions, involving fighter jets, escorts, and AEW&CS.	Synchronisation with ground forces, including Army units, ground-based radars, missiles, and Air defence systems.	Utilising naval components, including ships, submarines, SLCMs, and sea-based radars.	Integration with satellites, involving reconnaissance, early warning, navigation, and communications satellites.	Employing digital warfare capabilities, including offensive and defensive cyber operations.	Fusing electronic warfare tactics such as jamming, spoofing, and frequency-hopping to maintain secure communications.

As illustrated above, Pakistan’s NCWF plays a crucial role in executing synergistic operations. Although initially focused on improving the inter-service coordination, specifically between ground and air forces, the NCWF has advanced to consider non-traditional tactics, emphasising real-time imagery, cyber units for radar incapacitation, drones for surveillance, satellites for early warning, and fighter jets conducting precision strikes. Within the framework of modernisation, Pakistan has established the PAF Cyber Command (PAFCC), PAF Space Command (PAFSC), and National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP) over the period. It is noteworthy that the PAF’s “ABC” system, i.e., “locked by A, launched by B, guided by C”, is an outcome of the NCWF, which proved effective in battlefield successes, as demonstrated in Operation Swift Retort 2019 and the May 2025 conflict.

The second strategic measure is the adoption of the Full-Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) strategy in 2010, which was fully formalised and reinforced with the development of Al-Nasr tactical nuclear weapons in April 2011. Al-Nasr is a low-yield nuclear weapon with a range of 60 to 70 kilometres, developed as a “quick response” weapon in the event of a strategic defeat against India in the conventional realm. It aims to deter India from escalating to higher rungs of the conflict, thus helping to cover the entire spectrum – tactical, operational, and strategic. Combined with the NCWF, the FSD strategy essentially narrowed the space for India’s CSD.

Deconstructing the ‘New Normal’

New Delhi has a persistent ambition – a narrative called “new normal.” It has three primary features: associating terrorist acts with Pakistan, rejecting nuclear deterrence, and massive retaliation in response to a terrorist attack. So far, New Delhi has not achieved all three of them. First, equating terrorist activities with Pakistan needs strong evidence. A state that has been fighting terrorism for decades, labelling it as a ‘terrorist-sponsoring state’ is hardly a convincing assertion. Secondly, nuclear strategy incorporates the ‘rationality of irrationality’ – knowing that using nuclear weapons is an irrational decision, so one avoids using them. India has continuously tried to expose Pakistan’s nuclear deterrence; however, Pakistan ceased to go nuclear, particularly in the February 2019 and May 2025 events. The Indian leadership calls it a “nuclear bluff,” but it is a strategic restraint that rational decision-makers are expected to employ. Thirdly, India’s retaliation in response to terrorist attacks failed to yield a desirable outcome, as evident from the February 2019 and May 2025 crises, because Pakistan adheres to the Quid-Pro-Quo Plus (QPQ+) strategy.

Tracing the May 2025 Conflict: A Detailed Account

The May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan emerged after a terrorist attack unfolded on 22nd April 2025 in Pahalgam town of the IOJK. The armed attackers killed 26 tourists, mostly Hindus, and left several injured. On the same day, the responsibility for the attack was claimed by the TRF, but it later retracted on 26th April as the crisis escalated. The TRF is a rebel group fighting for the independence of Kashmir from India, which New Delhi considers an offshoot of the Pakistan-based armed group, the LeT. Pakistan officially banned the LeT, alongside its affiliated group Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), in 2002 following the 2001 attack on the Indian parliament, and later reinstated a ban on its front organisation, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), after the 2019 Pulwama attack. Pakistan only provides diplomatic support to the TRF in its fight against the Indian occupation of Kashmir. However, the Indian authorities accused the ISI and LeT of orchestrating the Pahalgam attack. Pakistan's defence ministry denied any involvement, stating that the proscribed organisation (LeT) was “defunct” and had “no setup in Pakistan”. Also, the Pakistani premier signalled readiness for an impartial investigation into the issue – an offer that India rejected discourteously.

On 23rd April, the Ministry of External Affairs of India declared the suspension of the 1960 IWT, the shutting of the Attari border crossing between the two sides, and the declaration of military advisors in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi as persona non grata. In retaliatory measures, Pakistan's National Security Committee (NSC) announced the cutting off of trade with India, the closure of Airspace for Indian flights, the suspension of the 1972 Shimla Agreement, which established the Line of Control (LoC), and declared Indian military advisors in Islamabad as persona non grata. The NSC meeting also highlighted that any attempt from India to stop or divert the flow of Pakistan's waters will be considered an Act of War. These measures from both sides were a prelude to a heightening crisis.

On 26th April, both India and Pakistan exchanged fire across the LoC, where each side accused the other of initiating. As tensions ascended, on 4th May, Pakistan's ambassador to Russia, Khalid Jamali, warned India of any misadventure, stating that Pakistan would “use the full spectrum capabilities”. However, on 7th May, India launched Operation Sindoor by striking missiles on nine alleged terrorist sites of LeT and JeM, among which five were in Azaad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and four in Pakistan's Punjab province, including Muridke, Bahawalpur, Shakar Garh, and a town near Sialkot.

Subsequently, the Director General (DG) of ISPR, Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, detailed that India carried out 24 strikes on six locations in Pakistan and AJK, targeting mosques and residential areas, resulting in 31 civilian deaths. International media later shared the images of demolished sites. Also, Pakistan's Defence Minister affirmed that on the night of 7th May, the PAF shot down six Indian fighter jets, including at least three French-made Rafales, with Chinese-manufactured J-10C aircraft equipped with PL-15E Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missiles, a claim about which officials in New Delhi present divergent perspectives.

As tit-for-tat continued, in the early hours of 10th May, India conducted missile strikes on three PAF bases, including Nur Khan, Murid, and Shorkot. Subsequently, Pakistan launched Operation Bunyan un Marsoos, targeting key sites in the IOJK and mainland India from where attacks were launched. It included 26 sites, comprising the BrahMos storage sites in Beas and Nagrota, the S-400 missile defence system in Adampur, as well as Army installations at multiple locations. Pakistan also conducted a cyber-offensive, which momentarily disrupted critical Indian infrastructure responsible for military operations during the conflict. After a severe confrontation, the United States (US) President Donald Trump, who initially refrained from intervention, announced a ceasefire, which de-escalated the conflict. However, the Modi government denies

US involvement, claiming that New Delhi observes strategic autonomy. In its conclusion, Pakistan named the period between April 22 and May 10 as “Marka-I-Haq”; however, India has not officially called off its military operation.

Pakistan on the Narrative Front in the May 2025 Conflict

At the heart of the May 2025 conflict, cognitive and narrative warfare played a decisive role for Pakistan. However, it was not a new phenomenon. During the 2019 Balakot crisis, the Indian media (backed by New Delhi) flooded the information space with news of Pakistan’s involvement in the Pulwama attack, followed by the IAF’s claims of destroying a school run by JeM in Balakot, allegedly killing 300 terrorists, and downing a PAF F-16 fighter jet. But no evidence was provided to validate these claims. Subsequently, the international media revealed through satellite images that the school was still standing, and the IAF targeted an empty place. Also, to refute India’s claims of downing PAF’s F-16 jet, Pakistan invited the US defence officials to count the F-16 aircraft, who later found that none were missing from the inventory. Afterwards, the Modi administration and the Indian media were exposed, which indicates why India is at the top of the list for the risk of misinformation and disinformation.

India’s Disinformation Campaign

Immediately after the Pahalgam Attack, the Indian government representatives, ex-military officers, and media persons started accusing Pakistan to justify punitive action. Following the execution of Operation Sindoor on the night of 7th May, the Indian media displayed headlines stating “India Strikes Terror Hubs”. The obsessed social media handlers overwhelmed the information space by sharing unverified content. Twitter (X) was loaded with patriotic hashtags such as #SindoorStrikes and #IndiaAvengesPahalgam. Likewise, exaggerated claims were circulated on WhatsApp, for instance, rumours of ‘100 terrorists killed by India,’ which was debunked by Alt News, an independent fact-checking organisation, but was ignored, given the cacophony of patriotic rhetoric.

It is worth mentioning that India’s free speech graph has been in decline since Modi came to power in 2014. Numerous channels run unabated in India because they report news that builds the reputation of the Modi regime. Furthermore, India, which currently tops the global population figures, has 200 million households owning television sets, each with access to 450 news channels, making television the primary instrument of perception management. And, since the anti-Pakistan narrative is so dominant in India, the general masses normally embrace and proliferate falsehoods associated with Pakistan.

For instance, on the night of 9th May, one Indian journalist shared information on X received from Prasar Bharati, India’s public broadcaster, stating that Pakistan’s army chief had been detained and a coup was underway. It was immediately displayed across major Indian news networks and rapidly spread on social media; however, there was no coup in Pakistan. Similarly, news outlets such as Bharat Samachar stated that the prime minister of Pakistan was hiding in a bunker; Times Now Navbharat reported that Indian armed forces had crossed into Pakistan’s territory. Other Indian channels like ABP News, NDTV, and Zee News constantly claimed major destruction in Pakistani cities. To justify unverified claims, several news networks displayed visuals from the Gaza conflict, the Philadelphia plane crash, and video games. In another instance, Sweta Singh of India Today announced early on 9th May that Karachi port had been attacked. Later, the Karachi Port Trust refuted these claims in a post on X; however, till then, the news met the front pages of a few Hindi newspapers.

Also, India Today reported that on 10th May, India had struck Pakistan's nuclear facility in the Kirana hills, with multiple "loitering penetrating munitions", but no evidence was provided to uphold these claims. Another Indian journalist, Rajdeep Sardesai, of the same news network, made an apology twice to its viewers for running fake news of Pakistani jets being shot down, stating that this was part of a planned disinformation campaign by the right-wing. Due to the lack of evidence for India's successes, the information vacuum was filled with "hyper nationalism" and "abnormal triumphalism", which formed a "parallel reality", as called by Nirupama Rao, India's former foreign secretary. The online anger voiced by Indians and calls for revenge against Pakistan depict how deeply New Delhi propagated the anti-Pakistan narrative.

In information warfare, consequences not only hit the enemy, but sometimes the collateral damage is your own audience. In the May event, the disinformation campaign was so over-amplified that it blurred the distinction between fact and fiction, leaving the Indian public in a dilemma. Many Indian analysts called Operation Sindoor a stunt designed for political gains. Sumanth Raman, a political analyst based in India, stated that "At a time when entire India was united, they put this out". Another analyst, Yashwant Deshmukh, wrote on X, calling it "absolutely disgraceful." Similar voices were raised over social media, urging the BJP government to observe restraint and unity. In addition, the opposition leader in the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian Parliament), Rahul Gandhi, also raised questions, stating that New Delhi did not achieve what was intended (establishing a New Normal), adding that Pakistan, on the contrary, has further closed the distance with Washington and Beijing. Seemingly, India's military operation, followed by a disinformation campaign, hurt the BJP's standing and India's military credibility on the global stage.

Pakistan's Strategic Counter-Narrative

Throughout the conflict, the ISPR, being the military's media wing, had the leading role in the battle of narratives. The downing of six Indian fighter jets (including three Rafales) by the PAF took centre stage in this conflict. As illustrated by the PAF's Air Vice Marshal (AVM), the ABC system incorporated multiple technologies. But more importantly, Rafales that were largely praised and demanded by Modi following the IAF's defeat in 2019, were the "main target" in the May conflict, as the PAF's AVM stated during a presentation. The PAF's consecutive win against the IAF sent a message to the West, which undermined Chinese technology, and the Modi administration, which underestimated Pakistan's conventional capabilities.

While initially India denied the loss of any jets, General Anil Chauhan, the chief of the Indian defence staff, later confirmed that Indian jets were shot down due to "tactical mistakes", not specifying the exact number. Similarly, France's air chief also clarified that three jets, including one Rafale employed by the IAF, had been shot down by Pakistan. Three months later, on 9th August, the Indian Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh revealed another dimension to it, declaring that India shot down five PAF fighter jets and one surveillance aircraft, but no proof was given to back these claims. Also, the Indian air chief rejected the statement of Captain Shiv Kumar, India's Defence Attaché to Indonesia, who previously claimed that the IAF lost fighter jets to the PAF because of political restraints. A.P. Singh affirmed that the armed forces had complete freedom in operations. These contrasting statements further weakened India's broader narrative. In contrast, the PAF's illustration of the ABC system and early control of the information space proved essential in restoring military credibility. Many YouTube Vloggers and other social media influencers subsequently discussed the ABC system, let alone academia and defence circles taking note of it.

Furthermore, the ISPR's continuous updates kept the information space in check, and the Pakistani private media networks emphasized official statements and factual reporting, rather than hype. In one instance, a fake

video was circulated on social media showing a female Indian pilot captured by the Pakistan army. The ISPR later addressed that this was propaganda from an unknown source; subsequently, the Pakistani mainstream media also highlighted it. Likewise, the Pakistani leadership clarified that it was New Delhi requesting a ceasefire following the 7th May attacks. Though the Indian leadership denies US involvement, the immediate de-escalation after Trump announced a ceasefire suggests that it was not a bilateral agreement. This calls into question the credibility of India's claims of strategic autonomy.

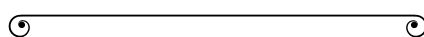
Similarly, the DG ISPR's interview with Al-Jazeera sent a message to the international community, which detailed evidence of Indian intelligence involved in target killings in Pakistan. The details included that since January 2024, 5,436 terrorist incidents have taken place, and the Pakistani military has been able to take down 1,987 terrorists. These evidences not only strengthen Pakistan's resolve against terrorism, but also reveals that the Pahalgam Attack might be India's internal problem as a result of New Delhi's oppressive policies against minorities. The externalization of India's internal problems is New Delhi's old approach, which brings the thresholds between the two nuclear-armed neighbors to a dangerously low level.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the May 2025 conflict was not confined to physical confrontation but also extended to the cognitive and narrative domains. This 'battle of narratives' was waged across social media, news outlets, and public briefings, considerably shaping public perception. One crucial lesson to learn from this conflict is that when numerous voices strive to define reality, the outcome is not clarity but confusion. India became a victim of the same cacophony where truth drowned in noise. In contrast, Pakistan has limited media networks compared to India; however, in military matters, they follow a proper hierarchy where the ISPR stands on top, something that India lacks. Overall, Pakistan's effective management of its narrative throughout the May conflict reinforced its military credibility. However, as the BJP's popularity decreases, Pakistan must be prepared for a potential conflict and another disinformation campaign. To eliminate loopholes, Pakistan needs to institutionalise partnerships between the state and private media. In parallel, media protocols must be established to counter disinformation campaigns. In this regard, integrating artificial intelligence might prove beneficial for the early detection of disinformation. Furthermore, digital literacy should be promoted in educational institutions to increase resistance against hostile narratives.

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ROLE OF INCENTIVES IN DENUCLEARIZATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IRAN AND NORTH KOREA



Swaira Irfan

The author is a research scholar of Strategic Studies at the National Defence University, Islamabad

Abstract

This research contributes innovatively in ascertaining why identical denuclearization incentives were successfully used in Iran in a temporary context (2015 JCPOA), yet not in North Korea. Making a case that aligning incentives for a regime's survival strategy defines success, where Iran's semi-globalized economy rendered it susceptible to sanctions relief, North Korea's autarkic regime highlighted nuclear weapons as existential safeguards. With Iran's nearly weapons-grade uranium and North Korea's hardened fuel missiles, the article posits a "survival first" framework suggesting incentives must reflect a state's intrinsic-security identity.

Keywords: denuclearization, JCPOA, regime survival, uranium enrichment, missile technology

Introduction

The search for nuclear weapons continues to stay among the most crucial matters in the global space concerning security. Since the days of the Cold War, international institutions have ensured that there is a myriad of diplomatic instruments to limit the spread of nuclear weapons, one of which is incentive-based denuclearization. These, however, have been met with very different reactions. This comparison centers on two major cases, North Korea and Iran, in order to investigate why otherwise similar diplomatic efforts have yielded different results. The study examines differences in regime type, economic linkages and security issues, influence how responsive states are to incentives from denuclearization.

The analysis shows that Iran's partially globalized economy and adherence to global norms render it receptive to gradual sanctions-lifting and security assurances, provided these are in accordance with its rights under the NPT. In contrast, North Korea's highly centralized, isolationist regime views nuclear weapons as a component of regime viability and is consequently less responsive to incentives towards universal disarmament. More effective for North Korea would be a gradual development of coexistence alongside incremental gains in building confidence, in place of seeking short-term gains such as denuclearization. This analysis draws upon academic research, official state and news reports in an effort to create an in-depth look at the strategic imperatives guiding each state's nuclear placement.

Denuclearization

It is described, in international relations, as a voluntary action of a state to restrain, reduce or eliminate its nuclear weapons programme. It involves freezing nuclear activities, dismantling facilities, and the acceptance of verification by International organizations like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It can be voluntary, under multilateral treaties, or the consequence of diplomatic pressure and negotiations.

Survival Strategy

One of the key ideas is that nuclear weapons might be a “survival strategy” for an authoritarian regime. That is, the leaders come to regard the bomb as the final insurance against foreign aggression or regime overthrow. In the case of North Korea, U.S. intelligence specifically indicates Pyongyang views its nuclear weapons as “critical to regime survival”.

This is a larger logic, when a state feels it is very threatened, it can hold on to nuclear weapons even at very high economic costs because they deter competitors. “Survival strategy” means a policy of building or maintaining nuclear weapons primarily to preserve the regime and security. Both Iran and North Korea have, at times, appealed to national security or deterrence to justify their programs. Yet their tolerance for giving them up varies enormously, indicating how highly each regime perceives its survival vis-a-vis the payoffs for cooperation.

Iran

Iran's nuclear problem has progressed in a series of turns. During the 1950s-70s, when the Shah was ruling Iran, It had U.S. assistance to construct nuclear reactors (e.g. the Tehran Research Reactor, 1967) and became a member of the NPT in 1970. The Shah had grand plans for a large civilian nuclear program. The 1979 Revolution ended these schemes and broke with the West. There was some secret nuclear activity by Iran in the 1980s. By the 1990s, Iran had constructed a fuel-enrichment facility at Natanz, revealed in 2002. Global tensions increased in 2003 when the IAEA called for Iran to suspend enrichment; Iran suspended enrichment briefly that year but resumed by late 2004. The UN Security Council imposed sanctions via resolutions (e.g. Res. 1737 in 2006) to stop Tehran's uranium enrichment and missile programs.

Iran's economy was severely strained. By 2011-2012 oil exports were in shambles and inflation was higher than 45% with unemployment at about 12%. These harsh economic pressures led Iran to negotiate seriously under President Hassan Rouhani. After two years of negotiations, Iran and the P5+1 (U.S., UK, France, Russia, China, Germany) agreed on the July 14, 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) The JCPOA placed hard caps on Iran's uranium inventory and enrichment (3.67% enriched uranium caps, centrifuge limits) and included increased IAEA monitoring. In exchange, the majority of sanctions related to nuclear were eased. The agreement included a trust-building model of gradually phased “salami-sliced” incentives: verified cooperation prompted incremental easing, e.g., the unfreezing of \$100 billion of Iranian assets and the return of oil export revenues.

After the deal, Iran's oil production recovered (above 2.5 million barrels/day) and GDP expanded vigorously (approximately +12.3% in 2016) showing how strong the economic incentives were under the JCPOA. But the JCPOA gains were insecure. In May 2018 the US pulled out and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Tehran progressively left its JCPOA constraints by 2019-2020, enriching uranium to over 20% purity and expanding stockpiles. The economy took a severe hit; IMF figures indicate GDP declining 4.8% in 2018 and set to contract by ~9.5% in 2019 after sanctions intensified, with inflation and currency losses hitting the population. U.S. "maximum pressure" thereby caused discomfort and internal protests inside Iran (e.g. large-scale anti-government protests during late 2019). This state of affairs pushed Iran back to the negotiating table with Washington in 2021.

In May 2025, the United States and Iran resumed indirect nuclear talks with Omani facilitation. The talks centered mainly on Iran's uranium enrichment program and the revival or amendment of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran offered to limit its uranium enrichment to a set level but refused

to suspend it completely. As a countermeasure, Tehran asked for meaningful economic relief, especially the removal of U.S. sanctions on its banking and petroleum sectors. The negotiations did not yield a signed agreement, but both sides hinted at a desire to continue diplomatic talks. Neither side issued a joint statement, though media briefings by participating officials validated the fact that negotiations were ongoing, with scheduled follow-up meetings.

North Korea

North Korea's nuclear path came earlier than Iran's and has been marked by rounds of negotiations and threats. The 1992-93 NPT crisis resulted in the 1994 U.S.–North Korea Agreed Framework. Under the agreement, Pyongyang committed to suspending its graphite-moderated reactor (plutonium production) in return for two light-water reactors (to be supplied by a consortium) and heavy fuel oil. The U.S. and its allies also committed not to invade North Korea. Implementation was problematic, but essentially no nuclear test took place for more than a decade.

In October 2002, nevertheless, North Korea confessed to a secret uranium-enriching program (breaking the Agreed Framework and its NPT commitments). By the end of the year Pyongyang had removed itself from IAEA inspection and by January 2003 formally withdrew from the NPT. This led to the institution of the Six-Party Talks in 2003 (the players being the Koreas, the US, China, Japan, and Russia). In 2005 the Six-Party talks resulted in a joint statement wherein North Korea agreed to "abandon all nuclear weapons" for energy and security assurances.

But relations soon deteriorated. North Korea tested its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006, at about 1–2 kilotons yield. This confirmed Pyongyang's ownership of a bomb and led to new UN sanctions. Sanctions and successive rounds of diplomacy failed to halt Pyongyang's push into hypersonic missiles and made more tests, two in 2009 and three further tests in 2013 and 2016 under Kim Jong-un. Finally, the supposed hydrogen bomb test in September 2017. In late 2017 North Korea had operational intermediate and intercontinental-range missiles capable of reaching U.S. soil and announced itself as a nuclear state in full.

Diplomacy in 2018–2019: summits between North and South Korea took place, and U.S. President Trump met Kim Jong-un twice (Singapore June 2018, Hanoi February 2019). The Singapore summit yielded only a loose joint statement, and the Hanoi summit collapsed when Kim proposed dismantling some parts of the Yongbyon complex in return for the removal of significant sanctions. Washington declined, demanding wider disarmament first. In October 2019 the first working-level talks after Hanoi (in Stockholm) concluded with no deal; Pyongyang said it would not resume negotiations unless the U.S. first made "substantial" concessions (i.e. full sanctions removal and such cease of military exercises).

Since then, communication has slowed down considerably, and weapons tests have resumed by North Korea (additional missile tests and purported new nuclear technology tests in 2022–2024).

North Korea has never signed on to verifiable denuclearization throughout. It has, at times, provided incomplete actions (freeze at Yongbyon, disable some of the equipment) in exchange for big security assurances and sanctions relief. For instance, in Hanoi in 2019 Kim proposed to shut down Yongbyon's primary reactors if the U.S. removed the most stringent UN sanctions. But Washington's insistence on total, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization (CVID) was not negotiable, and Pyongyang objected.

The DPRK's habitual practice, calling for mutual actions and walking away when not received indicates it places a higher premium on its nuclear umbrella than the incentives provided. As a U.S. intelligence report observed, despite all the outreach, North Korea remains unlikely to relinquish its weapons arsenal. Maintaining nuclear arms is critical to regime survival. Therefore, North Korea's bargaining style can be described as maximalist and suspicious, it has little hesitation to walk away if the quid pro quo is not viewed as adequate.

Analysis

This section discusses the two instances of the effectiveness of incentives (economic, security, diplomatic) and the factors that explain Iran's partial compliance and North Korea's defiance. Iran's engagement was largely driven by economic incentives and the relatively open nature of its economy, whereas North Korea's radical isolation and bleak survival prospects considerably reduced the autonomous effect of such incentives.

Economic Incentives

- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) offered considerable and real economic incentives for Iran. Relief from sanctions allowed access to significant revenues from oil exports, which account for approximately 85% of government income. The effect was striking, Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) saw a resurrection with an estimated growth of approximately 12.3% in 2016, along with the stabilization of its currency. Thus, the promise of economic relief was a welcome incentive for Tehran to compromise. On the contrary, the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions in 2018 led to a recession of Iran's economy by 4.8% in 2018, followed by a further loss of 9–10% in 2019, which highlights the importance of such incentives.
- Time and again, economic incentives, in the form of payments, energy aid, and sanctions relief, have been proffered to North Korea. The 1994 Agreed Framework promised two light-water reactors and fuel oil, but North Korea deemed them inadequate and was reluctant to take them. More recently, the U.S. “maximum pressure” campaign imposed some of the strongest sanctions ever on North Korea, yet analysis observes that even draconian sanctions were incapable of inducing an acute crisis. North Korea managed to maintain much visible economic activity by illicit trading nimble evasions. Pyongyang's exports fell in 2018, but its imports and domestic expenditure on displays of prosperity remained healthy. Short of that, North Korea has been capable of enduring sanctions and makes only demands for “grants” of relief in return for each of its concessions. The abortive 2019 Hanoi summit showed that Kim Jong-un would agree only to dismantle Yongbyon if the strongest sanctions were removed. The U.S. refusal to make economic concessions up front led to a stalemate. This indicates that North Korea's arithmetic of the bargain is very risk-averse, only sequential and symmetrical inducements would cause it to de-escalate its program.

Security Incentives

- Security guarantees to Iran have been implicit, not explicit. The JCPOA had given international legal assurance that Iran could keep its civilian program; Iranian officials often invoked their right to enrich within the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁸ But no official U.S. treaty or alliance promise was made to Iran. Its leaders remain suspicious, invoking experience (e.g., the fate of Gaddafi) to reject any security guarantee. US officials have kept secret that preventing war was part of the JCPOA rationale, but none were promised a mutual defense treaty. Iranian negotiators have thus demanded a right to have some minimum “nuclear deterrent” or at least a latent capability.

North Korea's security guarantees are foremost in Pyongyang's mind. The 1994 Framework delivered a non-aggression vow, with the U.S. committing to move toward full normalization of political and economic relations and not to strike. Subsequently, in 2005, the Six-Party joint statement incorporated U.S. guarantees of non-aggression. However, North Korea has consistently refused to accept these as adequate, lest it is being misled. Under the 2018–19 diplomacy initiative, U.S. and South Korean leaders provided public guarantees through diplomacy, but once more no binding treaty was signed. North Korea continues to view the presence of American troops in South Korea and occasional exercises as threats. Any vow short of an express security guarantee, therefore, is regarded as empty by the DPRK.

Diplomatic Motivations

- Iran's Relief from sanctions in the JCPOA also had diplomatic dividends relaxed oil and financial flows, return to the international markets, and relaxed UN sanctions. Iran ultimately received some international legitimacy, and the Rouhani government could claim diplomatic victory on the home front. Iran never enjoyed formal normalization by the U.S. (as Egypt did in 1979) or even the complete removal of military-related sanctions. But the potential for greater international interaction (e.g., access to visas, investment) was an incentive driver.
- North Korea's diplomatic inducements have included high-level summits and outreach efforts. The Kim Jong-un and President Moon Jae-in summit in 2018 and the 2018 Singapore summit with President Trump were historic overtures to Kim's regime. These events seemed to value status more than they offered material incentives. Pyongyang had expected a peace treaty to officially conclude the Korean War and finalize sanctions relief; without these results, the summits offered little long-lasting inducements. In reality, as soon as the negotiations fell apart, North Korea resumed provocation. Clean diplomatic interactions with no material incentives have therefore been insufficient to begin denuclearization efforts by Pyongyang.

Regime Type and Elite Calculus

- Both Iran and North Korea are authoritarian, yet with significant differences. Iran's Islamic Republic is multi-centered in power (Supreme Leader, elected President, political factions). Its economy is partially free-market and linked to the international system. When sanctions threatened mass protest (as between 2018–19), even hard-liners assumed that compromise may be necessary to prevent a regime-threatening crisis. North Korea's regime, by contrast, is a hereditary dictatorship with complete social control. The Kim dynasty runs a "totalitarian survival state" where opposition is brutally repressed, so public suffering does not readily translate into pressure on leaders. North Korean elites are also deeply indoctrinated in the Songun ("military first") and Juche ideology, holding out nuclear weapons as central. Survival of the regime has long rested on the manipulation of great powers against one another; nuclear weapons increase its bargaining leverage. Under this cosmology, even brutal penalties falter. Kim is able to assure his people that misery is brought about by imperial foes, burnishing nuclear resolve.

Economic Integration

- The Iranian economy is loosely linked to the global one. The country exported oil, traded globally (although with certain restrictions) and was open to foreign investment prior to 2018. That made economic constraints extremely harmful, so easing them was extremely beneficial. Iran immediately returned to the global market as soon as it could, proving how much it relies upon such ties. Despite that, Pyongyang is different; it was primarily autarkic even in good times. The country's economy relied upon limited mineral shipments and support from China. Despite UN restrictions, China continued limited

trade, while Pyongyang relied upon illicit activity (such as counterfeiting, drug smuggling and cyber crime) in order to enrich itself. The regime survived under restrictions for decades, so additional pressure did little to affect its intentions. The absence of regular commercial ties meant there were limited economic benefits (such as terminating trade restrictions) offered to Pyongyang; what primarily interests Pyongyang are security guarantees and maintaining the regime in power.

- North Korea sees an existential threat, proximate threats are U.S. troops in South Korea and also U.S.-South Korea military exercises. The DPRK regime is haunted by the fate of Iraq and Libya, so it sees nukes as the ideal deterrent. This creates a dual choice either maintain nukes or risk being overthrown. Iran also sees threats (by America, Israel and local rivals), though they are more distant. Its regime also has a theocracy and big population as other underpinnings of staying in power, so it might be less cornered. Iranian officials continually invoke the deterrence imperative, though they've survived more crises (eight-year war against Iraq, sanctions and local campaigns) without nuclear weapons.
- In Iran's case, Surviving does not simply require weapons; economies and international support are significant as well. The varying feelings of vulnerability determine how much each regime requires nuclear weapons. The variables account for the distinctions among them. Iran complied with the JCPOA (and is open to negotiation in 2025) primarily due to tangible economic gains and the frailty of its regime. When the JCPOA really delinked sanctions, Iranian moderates could demonstrate people's gains. The Iranian group recognized that concessions of some nuclear benefits would yield significant gains; they believed the U.S. would hold up its end, particularly because there was a multilateral enforcement mechanism. Leaders in Iran learned to hedge; they demand rights to enrich in order to secure power, though they haven't entirely eliminated negotiations. Conversely, North Korea has seldom found incentives adequate. Its tactics are to demand everything first. The DPRK insisted repeatedly that the U.S. withdraw its troops and sanctions first, then grant any nuclear concessions. It rewards itself in the short term by extending sanctions (since the U.S. rejects such terms) and in the long term by slowly refining its arsenal. North Korean negotiators have scant trust in U.S. assurances; in their opinion, eliminating nukes would expose the regime to vulnerability. The Hanoi demonstration illustrates their arithmetic, Kim would close Yongbyon if significant sanctions were removed, but he offered nothing until that commitment was assured. Such extreme demands guaranteed the negotiations failed. Overall, Iran responded to incentives because the incentives were acceptable and the survival arithmetic of the regime permitted negotiation. North Korea did not respond because its demands were greater (unmatched by incentives) and its rulers valued the bomb as its primary security insurance.

Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

The research yields important lessons. First, incentives are conditional on their success. Iran demonstrates economic incentives can secure nuclear concessions if they are paired with verification. North Korea demonstrates that however, without a security guarantee, incentives do not work. Second, survival motivates both regimes whereas Iran cares about international norms and will settle for partial bargains, North Korea's isolation guarantees its intransigence. Third, regime type and external relations dictate behavior such as Iran's semi-democracy promotes compliance, whereas North Korea's hardness breeds defiance. These lessons yield specific policy prescriptions for each case.

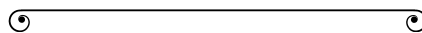
- The U.S. and its partners need to pursue a phased, controlled deal that accepts Iran's limited rights to enrichment. Forcing "zero enrichment" is a sign of bad faith and recycling the discredited "Libya model" which only feeds Tehran's distrust. Negotiations should allow Iran to have a small, peaceful enrichment program under strict IAEA monitoring.

- The U.S. and its allies must slowly restore economic incentives. This can employ a "salami slicing" approach as Iran complies with a negotiated limit, and sanctions are relaxed. The P5+1 might release incremental funds or permit some oil exports as benchmarks. Assurances of security are required, and the U.S. must make credible promises that Iran will not be attacked for compliance. The U.S. must commit to maintaining any new agreement. Domestic law or international commitments may deter future administrations from pulling out, as they did in 2018. Diplomatically, negotiations with Iran on matters like aviation, trade, and cultural exchanges can foster confidence. The 2025 talks suggest Iran will negotiate if it perceives mutual gain.
- US policy toward North Korea needs to change from complete disarmament to risk-managed engagement. Experts demand "stable coexistence" with nuclear North Korea in the next few years. America needs to first make concessions without requiring complete denuclearization as a pre-condition. For instance, Washington can relax some sanctions, including humanitarian assistance, in exchange for a freeze on some of North Korea's nuclear facilities.
- These actions need to be able to project a strong security stance for a U.S. reaction in case North Korea breaks its commitments. Steps towards building confidence could include top-level diplomatic engagements and declaring a move toward a comprehensive peace agreement. America must take the first step towards de-escalation, demonstrating a willingness to negotiate.
- Decreasing tensions in the short term, such as reducing military drills while reiterating defense commitments and guarantees to South Korea, can decrease Pyongyang's perception of threat. This can result in incremental denuclearization increases, such as closing Yongbyon facilities and halting missile tests in return for sanctions relief and security assurances.
- Seoul and Beijing have to cooperate regionally. Outreach by South Korea can prove peace dividends, and Chinese cooperation is needed. Nonproliferation needs to be the highest priority in U.S. policy, resisting new nuclear nations like Japan and South Korea. Stable peace that mitigates South Korean security fears can enhance U.S. extended deterrence credibility ironically. To avoid nuclear proliferation, it is preferable to shift from calls for immediate denuclearization to the creation of a secure and stable framework.

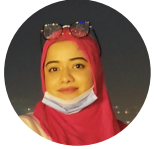
Iran's restrained reaction and North Korea's intransigence together demonstrate that denuclearization is as much a political as a technical problem. Economic incentives previously led Tehran to scale back its program and could do so again if genuine. North Korea sees its nuclear weapons as protection and will not give them up without a binding pledge. Policymakers will also need to rethink, offering Iran clear benefits and economic connections, while approaching North Korea with care, gradual steps and agreement to co-exist with close limitations. A knowledge of each regime's survival tactics is essential for negotiators pursuing genuine denuclearization gains.

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STRATEGIC CONTESTATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: NAVIGATING POWER POLITICS AND SECURITY DILEMMAS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Ayesha Zafar

The author is an NDU Alumna, working as Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Mirpur University of Science & Technology.

Abstract:

In contemporary times, the Indo-Pacific possesses great importance because it links the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. Thus, it becomes increasingly apparent during the current century in the geo-economic and security fields. The concept of free and open Indo-Pacific was first used by Japan. The United States (USA) adopted the idea and translated it into the three pillars of security, economy, and governance. In this paper, I tried to explain the invention of the concept of Indo-Pacific. Secondly, security issues and strategic challenges in Indo-Pacific. Thirdly role of India and China with respect to the security and stability of the region. And finally, the future strategy of India and China in the Indo-Pacific region and the Chinese grand strategy in the region.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific Free and open trade, China, India security issues, BRI, Japan, US.

Introduction

At the start of the 21st century, globalization ceased to be a phenomenon and became the real reason for the greater participation of nation-states. Giving momentum and strengthening relations between states to develop new regional orders defining international relations has become a major concern. The link between the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific has become more and more palpable during the current century in the geo-economic and security fields. A free and open Indo-Pacific immediately became the vanguard of Indian strategic thinking and decision-making. For a long time, India's strategic thinking process has remained remarkably that of the mainland, concentrating its land borders and addressing security issues at the highest altitudes, balancing power against China, however, the new changes of the Asian century brought a breakthrough. in perspective to accommodate the booming opportunities offered by the Indo Pacific. The West and primarily the United States hailed the Indian presence and appreciated India's efforts to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. What made the West so interested in India's concerns is that it is easily understood by East Asia's critical dependence on Asia's natural resources. from West and Africa across the Indian Ocean.

Origin of Indo-Pacific concept:

The origin of the term “IndoPacifico” goes back to German geopolitics, Karl Haushofer, who used it in the 1920s in his work “Indopazifischen Raum”, while the Indian historian Kalidas Nag referred to it in the 1940s. more contemporary. The term gained prominence after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech to the Indian parliament in August 2007, in which he noted: "We are now at a point where the confluence of the two seas is being born. . a dynamic coupling like seas of freedom. and prosperity. “The discourse became relevant as the transfer of power from West to East progressed. Multipolarism was emerging rapidly in Asia and there was a need to further strengthen it. To this end, structures such as Asia -Pacific were found to be limited in scope and unable to meet current geopolitical needs or respond to emerging economic commitments.

The first use of concept of “Free and open Indo- pacific:

Japan was among the first countries to use the phrase “free and open Indo Pacific” in its speech official. IN 2017, the United States (USA) adopted the concept and translated it into the three pillars of security, economy and governance. The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, and 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report marked a turning point in the evolution of the concept. While West Asia had in the past captured the attention and resources of the United States, it is today the Indo-Pacific, with its economic weight and its pivotal role in global security, which Washington's attention.

A Single Integrated Geopolitical Theatre: Indo- Pacific

Asia is seen as broad, vague, and continental at least in the areas of decision-making and politics, and the term Asia-Pacific has generally given the impression of "coast of the Asian Pacific" which was insufficient. to represent the complete image. The term Indo-Pacific designates the geographic immensity of this new geo-economic maritime domain which has the capacity to modify the future of Asia for the benefit of its giants. The world's third largest ocean division covers nearly 20% of the earth's surface water, bounded by Asia to the north, West Africa, and Australia and Antarctica from the East and South, the Indian Ocean is situated to promote trade, security and serves as the hub of Indian maritime policy.

By security, we mean the pursuit of threat freedom and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identities and functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. The essence of security is survival, but this also reasonably includes a wide range of concerns about livelihoods. At the very moment when this range of concerns ceases to deserve the urgency of the “security” label (which identifies threats as significant enough to justify emergency action and exceptional measures, including the use of force) and becomes a part of the day-to-day uncertainties of life is one of the difficulties of the concept (Barry Buzan, 1991.) “The Indian Ocean region (IOR) is the blue border that connects India to the

east and beyond. It doesn't take a second look to understand that India's future lies in its ability to harness the power of the IOR. since ancient times, maritime supremacy has been regarded as the mark of a great power. The efficient use of its ocean resources would channel the aspirations of an emerging economy. The geopolitical advantage has placed India in a prominent position in the region and this must be used more, with due care, to serve national interests. The security of the region has become of greater concern to India than to any other coastal state.

It is the confluence of these two oceans and the ever-increasing maritime trade that unites nation-states, whatever their ideological differences or their dogmatic changes. sides. Being a major power in the region and at the same time having a larger part of the Indian Ocean in its maritime controlled area gives India the strategic advantage of being a ruler rather than a follower of the rules in the region.

A manufactured super-region

Collective concerns about China's influence in the region are helping the continent perceive the Indo-Pacific initiatives as a super-region fabricated solely to protect itself from a comprehensive, Sino centric regional order. The idea was shared among academics across the continent and expressed through media reports and academic work produced. Such perceptions that China sees only increase the differences between the dragon and the elephant. The myth of the pearl series (Rajeev Bhutani, 2016) first suggested in 2005 by the American think tank is one of the reasons to be cited as being close to this Chinese understanding or this Indian strategic preparation. The idea is a strategic encirclement of India by making its neighbors economically and strategically dependent on China, thus creating a circle of influence around the sovereign Indian territories. The Chinese presence in the neighborhood indicates their aim to strategically engage India with its neighbors and continue to harness the region's resources and geopolitical advantage. For China, the Indian Ocean is inevitably part of its growing ambitions; China's network of military and commercial facilities along its Maritime Communications Routes (SLOCs), which stretch from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan in the Horn of Africa. Sea routes pass through various sea passages such as the Strait of Mandeb, Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Lombok, as well as other strategic maritime centers in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Somalia, the Indian Ocean states coasts.

A strategic network of Chinese military and trade structures and relations along maritime communication routes is not very attractive to New Delhi. Indian politicians and think tanks are convinced that the 21st century will see the rise of many maritime powers. And in South Asia, the state of the subcontinent has developed economically, politically, militarily, conventional weapons and modern arsenals, etc.

India in the Indo-Pacific

In the South Asian region, India has inherited a strategic advantage through the geopolitical privilege it enjoys by having a common border with the major states in the region like no other power in the same region. This geostrategic support has enabled this great nation to evolve as a network security provider around its strategic domain. Provide naval assistance and ensure a smooth flow of goods and services through its controlled waters. India has protected the status quo. One of the main reasons for being cited as the cause of India's greatest commitment to Oceanic India on the sidelines of quadrilateral (India, USA, Japan and Australia) and Indo-Pacific cooperation is the long presence of the Pakistani rhetoric in its foreign policy. Continental thinking is rigorously oriented towards a more active maritime engagement which manifests itself concretely through the continuous engagement in these two areas.

Indian Strategic Analyst C.Rajamohan (2012) argues that the seas of the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean constitute “one integrated geopolitical theater”, which is the Indo Pacific. In Australia, Rory Medcalf (2012) considers the new term to be “a valid and objective description of the larger regional system in which Australia now finds itself. Australian Ambassador to Washington Kim Beazley (2012) agrees, saying the Indo-Pacific presents "a practical and strategic reality that must be addressed. Strategic Arc: Thus, the following challenges have arisen as India performs in the wider Indo Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific Through the Chinese Lens

Although the Chinese government has not openly discussed the US 'Free and Open Indo Pacific' (FOIP) strategy - generally referred to simply as the Indo Pacific Strategy in China - the Chinese academic community has had a heated debate over the nature of the concept, the possible impact on China and the region and the future of Sino-US relations. These ongoing debates among China's internal voices highlight an important concept in US-China relations and regional affairs in Asia.

According to some Chinese academics, the Indo Pacific strategy is a preliminary idea for the United States to connect the Indian Ocean and the Pacific region, to limit the rise of China from a geopolitical point of view and to safeguard its leadership and own interests in the Region. Many Chinese researchers believe the concept has not matured. For example, Lin Minwang, a researcher at Fudan University, believes that the Indo-Pacific strategy is still a concept to be constructed and the quadrilateral dialogue on security - the Quad formed by the United States, Japan, India and the Australia - is just the start of building the Indo-Pacific security region.

China's Grand Strategy

A strong argument can be made that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, is China's global and grand strategy. The BRI has been widely recognized as Beijing's ambitious grand strategy to reshape and dominate the regional and international order by building infrastructure networks across Eurasia and eastern Africa. From the perspective of the Japan-U.S. alliance, Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, proposed by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in 2016 and later adopted as the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy by President Donald Trump, can be seen as a strategic countermeasure against the Chinese BRI. From the geopolitical perspective, the Chinese BRI strategy and the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy constitute a strategic competition between land and sea powers.

Security Issues and Strategic Challenges:

All the famous paradigms of today's world testify to the enormous stress that is asking for a new way of seeing, the former consent of the post-secondary world is frayed and a new one must emerge. The nature of the market has taken a hit and developing countries now fear the danger of zero-sum mercantilism and growing protectionism in Western economies.

Thucydides Trap: Professor Graham Allison of the Harvard Kennedy School popularized the term "Thucydides Trap" in international academia. He rightly notes in his analysis and seeks the appropriate context for the conflict between a power in progress and a power already advanced or the power in place. Any disruption of the status quo would lead to a series of proxy wars and continued disruption and unrest in the region. Allison supports her point when she brings up the case of rivalries between the United States and China in the international system to clarify the concept. The United States and other major Asian economies see China as a growing threat and usurper in the region that is poised to upset the balance of already balanced power equations thanks to the relentless efforts of the United States and the United States. 'Other Indian efforts as well as major Asian economies such as South Korea and Japan, etc. China's growing influence over India's neighborhood is a huge strategic border issue. This is expected to be one of the major strategic concerns and security concerns facing India in the region right now by a great power. This imbalance in the balance of power equations or, as Allison puts it in Conflict Probability, cannot be avoided.

Belt Road Initiative:

Globalization has given impetus to greater regional participation among nation states. Since 2013, Chinese think tanks and other political powers have been negotiating a new regional pact for trade and investment in the direction of regional cooperation. China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asian countries has alarmed Indian politicians. The new regional order modeled on the Belt Road Initiative has the ability to block India's influence among neighboring countries by pointing to a new evolving regional mechanism

on the Asian continent. The increased engagement through the Act East policy and sophisticated financial assistance programs, including the offer of assistance to Sri Lanka, must be seen in light of this strategic threat from its big neighbor. The recent withdrawal from the multi-dollar trade pact RCEP has shown much light in this realm.

There are other technical issues in the Indo-Pacific for India as much as it for others in the same littoral region. There exists a lack of clarity at the concept and about the way one must pursue their foreign policy orientations. Most of the players in this strategic region have varying concerns regarding the region which is said to be promising for a new maritime century where all the former Asian giants will rise again and peace shall flourish through trade balancing and better developmental practices.

Nevertheless, it is important to take note of the behavioral changes expressed by various stakeholders of the same endeavor and a highlighted feature seems to be the lack of willingness to shoulder the responsibility to provide an open and free Indo-Pacific for everybody else's larger growth and development. There has been no steady directions or serious dialogue partnerships happening on the side of the idea of Indo-Pacific. However, we do not neglect the fact that India is working assiduously for the success of this strategic idea as it sees itself as a growing sea power capable of harnessing the power of the Indian Ocean, channeling it for its overall growth.

Let us not assume that all that is going well and well about all these strategic innovations and craving smart ideas for the inducement of growth and development. Maritime initiatives that India is already a part of, such as BIMSTEC, IORA, etc., do not offer many promising results to validate. One of the main reasons India looks at its strategic backyard is primarily its remoteness from the political quarter or, to be exact, the visible deviation from South Asian initiatives ranging from strengthening the region to loosening its integrity is become a major problem that requires special attention. . India's engagement with its eastern neighborhood is proving to be an opportunity for India, as development and investment opportunities multiply in the case of India.

Conclusion

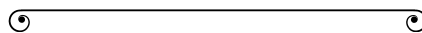
The future of the Indian Ocean Region depends on how regional common orders agree to limit the differences and to identify working on the continued growth and prosperity of the region in economic and political rules. The increased Chinese presence through economic, military and strategic arenas in states bordering India has caught the attention of New Delhi. The answer was to put in place an effective policy while waiting to reconnect with the East. Since 2014, Eastern Policy has been recalibrated as Act East Policy with increased engagement with ASEAN and beyond. The Indo-Pacific is a new emerging path of economic prosperity and

stimulating investment opportunities. In addition to other strategic concerns, India should also consider the following issues or options, given the prospects for growth across the Indo-Pacific.

This century demands an Asia of cooperation and not an Asia of rivalry which should continue to shape this century. At some point one must include all the necessary help that they can secure in order to enhance the efficiency of peace efforts in the region. The existing rivalries between states and mutual trust deficiency found among the regional commons stand to be a hindrance to the cooperation efforts. The major Asian neo economic players should render a mature contribution to take Asia to the heights of economic growth. Modern-day India, five years ahead is a technologically equipped and skill-driven society, it is a collective responsibility of the statesmen to equip its young generation to consider this growing fortune and render them services thus they must bear the fruits of this technology. Trade protectionism creates barriers and the modern states charged from globalization should choose to take the different stand as the whole of relations and existence would be peace and peace between fellow nation-states.

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Contact GSI



Global Stratagem Insight (Official)



info@thegsinsight.com



<https://thegsinsight.com/>



Global Stratagem Insight



@GSInsight03



Global Stratagem Insight



gs_insight_official



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