

Balochistan Think Tank Network



BTTN Monthly Review

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Volume IV

Issue: July 2024

Balochistan Think Tank Network, at BUIEMS, Airport Road, Quetta. www.bttan.org.pk

About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled on a monthly basis.

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Rapid Increase in India's Nuclear Forces

Dr. Zafar Khan

July 3, 2024

Like the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) also produces credible reports about the status of all nine nuclear weapon states. This is in terms of their deterrent force modernization, doctrinal posture, and the geopolitical and geostrategic reasons. Unanimously, these leading institutions argue that due to the return of great power politics primarily based on geopolitical reasons, nuclear weapon states do not only modernize but also increase their nuclear forces.

The recent SIPRI document reveals that India possesses more nuclear forces than Pakistan. Even before the publication of SIPRI report 2024, many Pakistani security analysts including the author of this piece predicted by critically analyzing that India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) was on many mega force development programs in all types of air, land and sea domains of forces besides increasing its strategic partnership with a number of leading countries such as the US, France, Russia and Israel. The policy for such a juggernaut force development program remains consistent irrespective of whoever is a political power in India. Consistency in the state's policy matters to help achieve the desired goals.

India develops many nuclear power plants and quite a few of them are not under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocol. The US-India nuclear deal signed in 2005 ultimately led to Nuclear Suppliers Group's (NSG) special waiver to India in 2008. It is interesting to note that NSG was initially created in response to India's nuclear tests in May 1974. Out of these nuclear power plants, India can produce lots of fissile materials helping India to develop many nuclear warheads. Along with other leading nuclear weapon states, India does not agree to cut off the existing fissile materials as prescribed in the proposed Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT).

India is aggressively following on a number of major force development projects such as the Ballistic Missile Development (BMD), Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs), sophisticated air-defense system such as S-400, nuclear powered submarines, Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), short and long ranges ballistic missiles including that of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), hypersonic missile, and even the aspiration for testing the H-bomb.

These deterrent force delivery systems will require lots of warheads. The more India aspires for developing sophisticated delivery systems, the more warheads it would require and the farther it gets away from the minimum deterrence it initially conceptualized. It is argued that India often omits the term “minimum” from its declared policy of credible minimum deterrence. That said, what is minimum against China cannot be minimum for Pakistan. Realistically, this is the dilemma that India may never get out of unless it officially declares that it no longer practices minimum deterrence.

All this is noted, India is rapidly increasing its nuclear weapons. Many may consider this for geopolitical reasons because of the fast-evolving global strategic environment where India exploits this to the best of its strategic advantage. While others consider this for security reasons as many Indian security analysts think both the rise of China and nuclear Pakistan as threat to India’s potential rise in the so-called Indo-Pacific region. Still others view India’s rapid increase of its nuclear forces as an opportunity to demonstrate its power projection, escalation dominance and military aggression against its rivals in the broader South Asian region.

This will have policy implications for India. India will demonstrate its power dominance against others. It will assert that the Indian Ocean is India’s ocean. It will then push out others from its declared hemisphere including that of the US. It will expand its naval bases in the Indian Ocean region. India will keep maximizing its power potential by containing its rivals. The more it maximizes its power, the more it undermines the security of its rivals to recall the classic “fear” factor emitting out of the security dilemma. Security dilemma increases fear, competition, arms race, alliances and crisis instability.

Given the evolving systemic security dilemma in South Asia, Pakistan may continue to produce effective countermeasures by plugging the deterrence gaps against its rival. This is reflected by full spectrum deterrence falling within the ambit of credible minimum deterrence. Despite being pushed for arms race, Pakistan may not desire for an aggressive arms race, but it would need to keep a strategic balance for deterrence purposes. Strategic balance rather than parity could be a suitable policy option for Pakistan to prevent its adversary from preemptive strikes. In addition to this, revisiting the proposed strategic restraint regime, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), nuclear CBMs, nuclear moratorium etc., may also contribute towards a broader strategic stability in South Asia.

<https://stratheaia.com/rapid-increase-in-indias-nuclear-forces/>

Beyond Headlines: The Overlooked Realities of Balochistan

Muneeb Ur Rehman

July 05, 2024

Balochistan's journey towards socio-economic development has been hindered by a complex interplay of factors rooted in its historical legacy, geography, low population density, and the absence of a vibrant middle class and social structure.

It is sad to observe how the development of Balochistan is ignored from a geographical and historical point of view. Centuries of marginalization due to its harsh geography and history while depicting the scarcity of water have impeded socio-economic progress of the province.

Although due to its location at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Balochistan has always been regarded as a region of great strategic importance and has been subjected to a series of invasions. Including those by Persian, Arab, and British forces, each leaving their imprint on the socio-economic fabric of Balochistan.

However, the colonial legacy, in particular, has left deep-seated inequalities and power imbalances that continue to shape the province's socio-economic landscape. British colonial efforts in Balochistan were primarily focused on maintaining control for strategic military purposes rather than fostering infrastructural or socio-economic development. Even though the railway tracks in the province were designed to facilitate troop movements and logistical support, the tracks served strategic purposes rather than primarily benefiting civilian transportation or economic development in the region.

This largest province is characterized by its harsh and unforgiving geography, which has historically posed significant challenges to human habitation and survival. Unlike other regions of Pakistan, Balochistan lacks significant river systems, with no major perennial rivers flowing through its terrain. Instead, the province relies on seasonal streams and underground aquifers for water supply, making access to water a perennial challenge for its inhabitants. The harsh geography characterized by vast deserts, rugged mountains,

and sparse water resources, makes it less conducive to the establishment of agricultural settlements or urban centers compared to other regions.

The low population density in Balochistan is another significant factor and challenge for its socioeconomic development. The province has a population density that is far lower than the national average, making it difficult to get economies of scale when it comes to infrastructure and public services. The cost of providing essential services such as transportation, electricity, healthcare, and education per capita is considerably higher compared to more densely populated regions. Additionally, the limited population base means that revenue generation through taxes is comparatively lower, making it difficult to finance large-scale infrastructure projects and sustain public services without significant subsidies from the federal government.

There are also peculiar difficulties and challenges because of the demographic makeup of Balochistan. It is commonly observed that the name Balochistan is perceived as the province representing only the Baloch. This is not correct. Balochistan is home to a mosaic of ethnic and tribal groups, each with its distinct cultural heritage, socioeconomic dynamics, and linguistic identity.

The province is primarily inhabited by the Baloch, Pashtun, and Brahui ethnic groups, alongside smaller communities such as Hazaras, Sindhis, Punjabis, and Saraikis. The Baloch, primarily inhabit the western and southern parts of Balochistan. Pashtuns are concentrated in the northern and eastern regions of Balochistan. Additionally, smaller ethnic groups such as the Hazaras, Sindhis, and Punjabis, who are mainly concentrated in urban centers like Quetta and its surrounding areas contribute to the province's diverse demographic landscape.

Balochistan, in contrast to other regions of the country where the middle class acts as an engine of prosperity and stability, lacks a vibrant middle class. The province is pigeon-holed by a stark divide between a tiny but powerful class of tribal chieftains, a struggling lower class, a small group of public sector employees, and a segment of politicians who wield pro rata influence due to their close connections to the state apparatus.

This deeply ingrained system of patronage suppresses dissenting voices and perpetuates a culture of reliance on pro-rata tribal leaders rather than enabling communities to participate in decision-making. This imbalance restricts economic mobility and keeps differences within the province alive. This is further challenged by a weak entrepreneurship class, and the majority of the population's primary dependence on government jobs and subsistence farming for their livelihoods, which hinders economic diversification and diminishes social cohesion, and hampers efforts to build consensus around development priorities.

Finally, it may be concluded that Balochistan has complex and deeply ingrained socioeconomic challenges that are a result of its historical legacy, geography, demography, bad governance, corruption, low and scattered population, and social structure. In order to effectively address these challenges, a comprehensive strategy that recognizes the complexity of the above factors, the province's environment, and works to empower local communities, promotes inclusive development, and encourages economic diversification can effectively unlock the potential of Balochistan to construct a more prosperous and equitable future for its populace.

<https://www.wqi.world/beyond-headlines-the-overlooked-realities-of-balochistan/>

Debate on the Resurgence of Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons

Muhammad Usama Khalid

July 7, 2024

Tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) or Non-Strategic nuclear weapon (NSNW) are short range and low yield nuclear warheads which are fundamentally designed and developed to be employed and utilized in an adverse scenario in the battlefield for limited strikes. However, the security risks associated with the handling of the TNWs are of escalation, proliferation and accidental use, but the major among them is the risk associated with their handling as TNWs may be pre-delegated bolstered with the issue of “use or lose” dilemma. It may be argued that if TNWs are directly controlled by the nuclear weapon states, there are less chances of accident and inadvertence.

Historically, the inception of TNWs dates back to the late 1950s, during the Cold War era, when the US introduced these low yield nuclear devices. The notion behind their inception, as their current name implies, was to employ such weapons on the battlefield to counter adversary forces at the tactical level where the intended targets are the operational forces and military Command and Control (C&C) structure.

Before delving into the main debate, it is important to briefly elaborate for layman knowledge that the yield of TNW, which determines the device’s destructiveness, varies from 10 to 50 kilotons. For example, the nuclear bombs dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II by the United States were only 16 and 25 kilotons, respectively. The tale of the destruction of those two big cities of Imperial Japan is evidently visible to the whole world as a case in point.

As the Russia-Ukraine war continues to unfold, the debate on TNWs has resurged on the international political spectrum. On June 13, 2024, a Russian strategic military force battalion stationed at the northern Leningrad district – strategically critical position as the region is bordered with NATO member states such as Norway, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which covers almost all of Russia’s European border – took part in drills to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in the evolving hostile scenario.

Though the Russian President Vladimir Putin has frequently asserted that Russia is not intended to introduce nuclear weapons into the current ongoing war theater, the mobilization of the nuclear forces indicates the flagrant contradictions in the Russian leadership's words and actions. According to Mr. Putin, he himself proudly declared at one of the press conferences that the yield of the Russian TNWs is 70-75 kilotons which in the case of TNWs is massive yield devices that, if used, could have far reaching strategic implications and such an idiotic decision will sink the whole world into the nuclear Armageddon.

Russia, according to the figures quoted in the 2024 Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' latest report on Russian Nuclear Forces, possesses 1558 non-strategic nuclear warheads as of today. However, in the very same report, experts highlighted that exaggeration is being evident from the US officials, actual figures are still unverifiable due to the secrecy of the Russian nuclear program.

The recent preparatory drills of Russian nuclear force command are not a new phenomenon. The initiation of such military exercises was conducted earlier in May this year, when Russia, for the first time in two years of Ukraine's invasion incorporated the deployment of TNWs. Belarus's inclusion in such military exercises, as well as the deployment of Russian TNWs on its soil, would play a strategically significant role in a wartime situation. One of the primary reasons for the resurgence of the nuclear weapons debate in the international political arena is the trust deficit at the global level between major state actors. The weakening of strategic restraint regimes, such as the Cold War-era strategic arms control regimes that both the US and Russia have violated, suspended, or de-ratified more frequently in recent times, has resulted in existing trust deficits between major states.

In a volatile situation like this, introducing nuclear weapons into an active warzone would significantly increase the risk of inadvertent nuclear escalation due to miscalculations or misperceptions. Such a move could have profound strategic consequences for the stability of the arms race. Specifically, it heightens the risk of unintentionally escalating conventional warfare into a full-blown nuclear conflict in the broader European region.

These military exercises involving nuclear weapons are not only jeopardizing the regional peace and security, instead they will also hamper the global strategic stability by initiating the dangerous arms race in the comparatively non-aggressive and non-nuclear Scandinavian buffer zone between mainland Europe and Russia. Therefore, careful consideration and the establishment of credible and acceptable restraint regime are crucial to prevent further escalation and maintain regional stability.

The Western actors, such as the US and the EU, must manifest serious deliberation regarding these Russian actions. Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Western policymakers were also not acknowledging the credibility of Russian threat of invading Ukraine. Similarly, in the current scenario, the same Western elites and scholars remain skeptical about the threat posed by Russian nuclear use. Despite being Russia's final and most comprehensive option, we should not ignore or completely dismiss it from the discussion.

<https://thegeopolitics.com/debate-on-the-resurgence-of-russian-tactical-nuclear-weapons/>

The Future of Arms Control

Sher Ali Kakar

June 11, 2024

Technological advancement with military applications has led to a dynamic debate among strategic and defense experts. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has received widespread attention from experts and scholars who doubt the first full-scale drone war and the first AI war because of the massive use of these technologies. Many technological advances which the world has made over the past two decades have featured in this war which includes the use of drones, cyber war, software-defined war, cyber-attacks, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and space-based technologies. Space operations have been an important enabler in this war in real-time. Although the traditional aspect of warfare is not reduced in relevance and significance and the ongoing war shows that many features of warfighting remain unchanged, the war presents us with a way to understand how emerging technologies impact conflicts and how they dominate modern warfare. Technological development thus raises questions about the wider impacts of emerging technologies on the future of warfare and arms control which is already crippling.

Technologically advanced countries are accelerating the pace of development for innovation. These technologies are underlying the existing weapons, platforms, and systems. Lethal Autonomous Weapons System (LAWS), Swarm drones, network surveillance tools, and various applications of AI—all of which can be employed for the development or enhancement of weapons and delivery systems. Cyber-attacks, advanced weapons systems, and the impact of AI on peace and security have created new challenges for humanity, as nuclear escalation is becoming more likely now. Emerging technologies can promote states' military readiness to engage in offensive actions. They could equally result in conventionally weaker countries' dependency on nuclear weapons. For instance, in the case of Ukraine and Russia, Russia has already signaled an increased reliance on nuclear weapons due to the ineffectiveness of its conventional forces. Emerging technologies are playing an important role in Ukraine's defence against the Russian military. Moscow has realized the significance of AI

capabilities in the battleground. It is using AI to help launch its attacks and now looking toward increasing AI capabilities to address deficits in its war with Ukraine.

The availability of these new and developing military technologies in the Russia-Ukraine conflict affects the arms control regime greatly. Technological advancement and the ever-expanding complexity of the difference between military and non-military usage have put various existing arms control treaties under stress as those have been developed mainly for conventional arms. Although these cutting-edge capabilities may give one edge to the states that control them, there is a growing concern that this perception of technological superiority could increase the potential for miscalculation and unintended nuclear escalation. The proliferation of new technologies may just provide a false sense of superiority, and this might grow worse in the future and make it difficult to develop policies on how best to manage escalation, reduce risks, and arms control, and establish a strategic restraint regime.

On the one hand, these technologies provide the opportunity to create new approaches, especially to nuclear non-proliferation by enhancing safeguards and verification systems which play a crucial role in indemnifying compliance by the state parties. On the other, technological advancement is rapidly disrupting arms control arrangements, which are already crippling due to major withdrawals, violations, and non-compliance to arms control agreements. In recent years, Russia and the United States have withdrawn from many important arms control bilateral agreements which have led to uncertainty in the international security environment. The collective efforts by states over the decades have effectively restricted the arms race and threats in conventional and nuclear domains. However, the emerging technologies with military applications combined with the lack of consensus among the major powers, particularly after the Ukraine war are compounding the international security environment. Recently, the US State Department urged China and Russia to commit to the use of nuclear weapons only by humans, raising concerns about automatic systems such as AI-control. The US is also concerned about the Chinese machine-gun-toting robot dog which was recently showcased in China-Cambodia wargames.

Emerging technologies are already visible on the battlefield, and it is more likely now that the scale and complexity of war will change in the future. The US, China, and Russia are innovating and adopting these technologies, while other countries are in the early stages of development and learning lessons. Thus, the technological development we see today will reshape the future of warfare. The world, which is currently divided and lacking consensus and political will, needs to set standards and rules to strengthen the arms control regime and strategic restraint.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Jul-2024/the-future-of-arms-control>

Balochistan's Surplus Budget Overlooks Universities' Financial Crisis

Mommen Khan

July 21, 2024

Higher education has served as a significant pillar of society for decades. It boosts economic growth, knowledge, and competition within the economy and contributes to sustainable development. The Global Agenda 2030 also emphasizes quality and access to higher education under SDG-4. When it comes to Balochistan, higher education in the province has remained neglected over the past five decades. It is poorly planned and managed, and currently faced with a crippling shortage of funding. The financial crisis has now gone from bad to worse with adverse implications for higher education institutions. The budget for 2024-2025 was expected to bring financial stability to higher education institutions but diminishes the hope of stability and brings a new struggle.

In the light of the 18th Amendment, the provinces are delegated with the autonomy to have control over their education and health. However, Balochistan has failed to establish a provincial higher education commission. It is evident from the budget allocation of the province to the public universities that higher education has remained the least priority in the realm of provincial authorities. As an effect, this has led to several challenges in providing quality education to the masses and major universities in Balochistan are confronted with serious financial crises.

Founded in 1970, the University of Balochistan is the oldest university in the province. It has remained a torch bearer in providing higher education. Currently, it is mired in recurring crises and education has taken a back seat. Over the months, these crises have perpetuated to the level that the university was unable to provide salaries to its employees. The faculty members and academic and administration staff have been protesting for their salaries for the past four months and boycotted the academic activities within the university. The Irony is that when the authorities go to HEC, it is usually claimed that the provincial government is responsible for allocating funds and the latter claims that they don't have funds. So, the funds do not trickle down from either side, perpetuating the crisis further.

In the past, despite being a young university, BUISTEMS has played a significant role in producing employable graduates in the fields of IT, management, and engineering. It has maintained the standard comparable to other renowned institutions in Pakistan. But, in the past two years, this university has also had a serious crisis, and its staff has not been paid salaries for months. Moreover, after numerous strikes by the faculty and administrative staff, they are paid with their basic pay only for several months. All these things accumulate and have deleterious effects on the provision of quality education. In the midst of all these crises it is near to impossible that qualified people will come to teach. On the other hand, the existing faculty will also look for better opportunities that will lead to brain drain both from the province and country.

There were high hopes from the provincial budget for 2024-2025 that sufficient funds would be allocated to universities in Balochistan. However, the allocated amount of Rs 5 billion in the budget for 11 universities of the province and Rs 2 billion for institutions faced with severe financial crisis is inadequate to meet their financial requirements. It is important to note that the annual salaries of the University of Balochistan and BUISTEMS are approximately Rs 5 billion. Nonetheless, a surplus budget has been presented by the province claiming that the allocation of HEIs has doubled from the previous year. This amount is hardly enough to finance expenses for a few months, thus financial woes would continue to affect higher education in the province.

Sub-campus of the universities, which have been established for vested political interests, have proven to be ineffective and exacerbate the financial crisis, as the enrollment rates in such campuses are so low that the cost exceeds the benefits. In areas where these campuses have been established, students have easy access to the main campuses of the universities. Therefore, establishing new campuses should be stopped immediately and the existing universities should be prioritized.

As an effect of these continuous crises, talented scholars and researchers are forced to leave due to financial restraints, and limited career advancement. It's the need of the hour for the provincial authorities to consider this issue and devise effective strategies. In the short run, the authorities should allocate more funds to these institutions as an immediate

response to their crises. There should be a proper mechanism for designing the endowment fund structure to break the chain of these crises. Steps should be taken to improve the quality of higher education and promote the culture of research.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/07/21/balochistans-surplus-budget-overlooks-universities-financial-crisis/>

The Colonial Hangover

Manahil Bazai

July 24, 2024

The national language plays a significant role in the harmony of a country's people. It is more than just a medium of communication. Besides factors like – a boundary, flag, and currency, it makes a nation respectable and unique by giving it a specific identity. Prioritizing national language is crucial in fostering cultural identity, promoting unity, and facilitating communication. It acts as a tool for bridging diverse communities and creates a sense of belonging among the citizens of a country. It promotes trade and business across various areas by removing language barriers within a country. When workers can interact easily, businesses can run more smoothly, which spurs growth and productivity. Additionally, as it creates an environment that is favorable for multinational businesses to establish themselves and grow, a common language draws in foreign investment. History demonstrates that all great leaders made a sincere effort to strengthen the national language. Mao Zedong, the revolutionary leader of China, held a high regard for his native language.

Unfortunately, Pakistan shows a very different picture. Despite the declaration of Urdu as the national language of the country, the authorities with their inefficient efforts have failed to prioritize it. The irony is that constitutionally Urdu is our national language, while English is an official language and has still become a symbol of pride in the country. It has created a divide by distancing the masses from their linguistic roots. No nation in the history of the world has progressed without prioritizing its national language or taking pride in its own culture and roots. Several factors have impeded Urdu from emerging as a priority language in Pakistan. This includes the influence of the British legacy, the educational system, the global dominance of English, and the lack of consistent and robust policies that prioritize Urdu.

From a historical standpoint, Urdu represents Muslim unity and identity and has served as a unifying force across diverse cultures and ethnic groups ever since the Pakistan Movement. Urdu always benefited greatly from the All-India Muslim League's unwavering backing. The advantage of Urdu's "national" identity further strengthened its

standing. Before Pakistan came into being, the Urdu poets- philosophers, local aristocrats, and Muslim scholars prioritized Urdu and adopted it as a symbol of pride. On the other hand, to create an English-speaking aristocracy that could aid in bridging the communication gap between the colonizer and the colonized and ensure the smooth operation of the colonial company, the colonial agency exclusively provided English-medium education in urban centers. Given how deeply ingrained the Anglicized military, courts, and bureaucracy were in the social structure of the recently established independent state, it is not surprising that these Anglicized authorities chose to use English for official documentation and communication following colonial customs. Thus, from there onwards the British legacy continued and is ingrained in our bureaucratic system and impeded Urdu to be prioritized.

The educational system in Pakistan has also failed to prioritize Urdu as the true essence of the national language. This also stems from the British colonial era which established a perception that proficiency in English and studying from English medium institutions are seen as a measure of success and modernity. It is a common practice these days that in the stages of language development of a child, parents tend to make them learn English first instead of their mother tongue and their national language. This concern of the parents, because of the predominance of English being a universal language and the reliance on it in reading, writing, and conducting research, is understandable but it should not be at the cost of our own national language.

Despite being given the status of the national language in the constitution, Urdu has been relegated to a secondary language and is often seen as a language of the less privileged. The existing literature on different levels fails to reflect the literary and cultural heritage of Urdu. This in effect limits students' exposure to their linguistic roots. The Urdu-medium institutions lack high-quality educational resources and insufficient teacher training that equips teachers with modern techniques.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/24-Jul-2024/the-colonial-hangover>