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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 monthly.

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Editor's Note

The July 2025 edition of *BTTN Monthly Collage* comes at a decisive moment for Pakistan's strategic future. The analyses compiled in this issue make one fact clear: Pakistan faces an increasingly aggressive regional environment, driven largely by India's relentless military expansion and its efforts to manipulate the international narrative. Yet, these challenges also reaffirm the strength, resilience, and credibility of Pakistan's own strategic posture.

This month's contributions shed light on India's accelerating missile and nuclear ambitions, developing longer-range missiles, expanding sea-based capabilities, and chasing ICBM status, not out of genuine security necessity, but to project dominance and prestige. These actions, coupled with disinformation campaigns and lobbying in multilateral forums such as the FATF, reveal a deliberate attempt to undermine Pakistan diplomatically and strategically. The international community must recognize that such destabilizing moves do not serve peace—they increase the risk of miscalculation in one of the world's most sensitive nuclear regions.

Pakistan, in contrast, has maintained a measured, responsible, and credible deterrence policy. Our nuclear doctrine is rooted in minimum credible deterrence and strategic stability, not prestige or aggression. Where others seek to provoke, Pakistan continues to exercise restraint while ensuring that its defense capabilities remain modern, reliable, and fully capable of countering any threat. The FY 2025–26 budgetary allocations, as analyzed in this issue, highlight a careful balance between economic realities and the imperative to sustain robust defense preparedness.

Emerging technologies, missile defense systems, and strategic innovation are also examined here—not as ends in themselves, but as tools Pakistan must integrate wisely into its defense framework. While systems like the Iron Dome are often celebrated, the strategic truth is that they can upset deterrence stability and embolden offensive strategies. Pakistan's focus, therefore, must remain on developing indigenous capabilities, reinforcing its second-strike credibility, and adapting doctrines to meet the

realities of modern conflict.

On the global stage, the articles addressing the shadow market for nuclear materials, the double standards of the so-called “rules-based” international order, and the shifting dynamics of conflicts such as Israel–Iran all point to a world where selective morality and power politics too often replace genuine commitment to peace. In this environment, Pakistan’s consistent call for equitable security arrangements and adherence to international law stands in sharp contrast to those who manipulate norms for their own gain.

The narratives emerging from India, its inflated two-front war fears, crisis escalation rhetoric, and prestige-driven weapons programs are less about genuine defense and more about political posturing. For Pakistan, these are not merely propaganda tactics to be ignored; they are signals of a mindset that sees confrontation as politically useful. Our response must be to continue exposing these narratives, countering them with facts, and reinforcing our diplomatic, strategic, and moral position on the world stage.

The lessons from this edition are clear: Pakistan must remain vigilant, agile, and confident. Our national security cannot be left to chance, nor can our narrative be shaped by adversaries. We must invest not only in weapons systems but in strategic clarity, regional diplomacy, and the moral high ground that comes from a policy anchored in restraint and responsibility.

As this month’s collection demonstrates, the balance of power in South Asia is not solely a contest of arsenals, it is a contest of credibility. And in that context, Pakistan’s measured resolve, defensive doctrine, and unwavering commitment to stability give it an enduring advantage. The task ahead is to protect that advantage, project it confidently, and ensure that our adversaries understand one unshakable truth: Pakistan’s restraint is not weakness, and its strength is not for provocation, but for the protection of its sovereignty and the stability of the broader South Asia region.

What emerges from this month’s collection is a sobering reality: the security architecture of South Asia is becoming more brittle, not less. The expansion of military capabilities,

the erosion of arms control norms, the proliferation of crisis narratives, and the weaponization of global institutions together create a strategic environment ripe for confrontation. The challenge for Pakistan and indeed for the international community—is to respond with policies that are measured yet firm, adaptive yet principled.

At a time when perception can be as decisive as actual capability, the need for clear-eyed analysis and responsible policy has never been greater. This edition of *BTTN Monthly Collage* serves as both a warning and a guide reminding us that while technology, power, and prestige may dominate headlines, the real currency of security lies in stability, credibility, and the capacity to avert the very conflicts our arsenals are built to fight.

Editor

Dr. Siraj Bashir Baloch

India's Missile Ambitions: A Threat to Global Peace

Nomeen Kassi

India, aspiring to be a global leader, is focusing much on its economy, military, and technology. India's ambition towards missiles is not a story unknown to the world. Through massive development, India seeks to become a regional hegemon, disturbing the strategic stability of South Asia. India is constantly developing, procuring, and modernizing its tactical and strategic forces. Similarly, India is highly focused on long-range Missiles. Such a range in missiles is not just a threat to its neighbors, China and Pakistan, but also a threat to global peace. India might be shifting from 'Minimum Deterrence' to 'Maximal Ambition.

In recent years, India has made a considerable expansion in its missile Programme, procuring modern weapon systems such as Agni-IV and Agni-V. Formerly, in 2024, India tested its latest ballistic missiles – Agni-V with a range of 5500 Km. It is equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs). Which means it can aim multiple targets. The Agni-IV missile with a 4500km range and Agni-V is

perceived as a strategic weapon that can target the entire China. Furthermore, the development of missiles beyond these ranges, such as Agni-VI, which is in the developing stage and is anticipated to have a range between 12,000-16000km, anticipates India's stride for power projection and nuclear supremacy. The missile development program in India under the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has undergone extensive evolution of the ballistic missiles short-range to highly skilled Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). Recently, at the Kerala AeroExpo 2025, Indian scientists presented the Agni series, ranging between 700km to more than 10000km, from Agni-I to the under-development Agni-VI. India's development of ICBMs should ring alarm bells beyond South Asia, asserting that the globe will become vulnerable to India's ICBMs in the future. Such long-range missiles complicate the global strategic environment. With the integration of MIRVs and the acquisition

of long-range strategic missiles, India wants to ensure Full-Spectrum Escalation Dominance. Additionally, it not only destabilizes the region but also promotes a global arms race, threatening broader peace and security. *India wants to ensure Full-Spectrum Escalation Dominance.* To elaborate, equally alarming is the development of the K-series SLBMs, which are displayed in DRDO showings at the same expo. The K-15 possesses a range of 750 km, whereas the K-5 in development will have 5,000 km. The K-6 is estimated to reach 8,000 km, covering most parts of Europe, Asia, and even North America, assuming that it is launched by deployed submarines positioned on the frontline. These capabilities are of much more than India's characterized desire for a credible minimum deterrence. Rather, it showcases global power projection.

This power projection prescribes that India might be shifting from "Minimum Deterrence" to "Maximal Ambition". Although India has always promoted the so-called policy of No First Use. But increasing questions of the rationality of this doctrine have been raised even by the policymakers themselves in India. In 2019, India's Defense Minister Rajnath

Singh stated: "India has strictly adhered to the 'No First Use' policy. What happens in the future depends on the circumstances."? This strategic uncertainty, combined with massive expansion in the missile and warhead systems, is no longer an act of restraint. Rather, it indicates the move to the offensive posture and possible preemption, this time rhetorical, doctrinal, and technological. The modernization of India's defense is reportedly backed by the rising aggressiveness of China. But missile development, particularly such devices and systems as the MIRVed Agni-V and other submarine-launched K-series, poses a threat not merely to the immediate neighborhood of India, but also the global international order. This situation creates a false sense of security in the minds of Indian planners while ignoring the rise of an arms race around the globe. In case of escalation of tension, arms race in the future can result in a nuclear exchange as countries feel vulnerable. Even though the government of India may rejoice in its technical achievement, the propagation of MIRV capability is a sign of a greater worrisome trend in international nuclear arsenals

that is already showing signs of an emerging nuclear arms race with more threatening MIRVed missiles. Uncontrolled missile modernization is creeping toward what should be deemed normal for the world to accept. To mitigate the risk, Global powers need to urge India to be more transparent and engage in arms reduction negotiations at the regional and international level. Likewise, South Asian countries, particularly through the use of back-channel diplomacy, need to pledge themselves to confidence-building measures (CBMs) to avoid unintentional escalation. The talks on some form of strategic restraint regime, earlier proposed by Pakistan but declined by

India, may also be initiated to reduce the risk of a greater arms race in South Asia.

The growth of missile force by India, particularly switching to MIRVed ICBMs and improved SLBMs, deserves particular attention. This path is not a mere preservative exercise as such, but it runs the risk of disturbing the nuclear balance of deterrence not just in South Asia, but also on the globe. Uncontrolled missile modernization is creeping toward what should be deemed normal for the world to accept. The 21st century requires strategic stability based on restraint, not on an arms race under the pretext of deterrence.

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Nomeen Kasi

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Expanding Missile Ranges and Misinformation Media Reach

Muneeb Ur Rahman

The Indian media has become increasingly a source of disinformation, nationalistic propaganda, and narrative control in general, facilitating the thriving of nationalistic politics at the cost of regional stability. The same pattern that was long observable in the domestic context emerged internationally quite clearly with the recent Pahalgam incident and the much-hyped so-called Operation Sindoor. These fabrications are not minor errors; they are strategic lies with the potential to spark real-world consequences.

Hours after the attack, Indian media initiated a massive stream against Pakistan without single evidence in sight. The truth was overlooked in the name of sensation and the laxity of security was swept under the carpet of nationalism. In the recent past, several countries (Nepal, Iran, Bangladesh, and China) have protested against or blocked Indian media channels because they disseminated fake narratives. What is more troubling, however, is the way that this media strategy propagates into the

international discourse, now, these fake Indian narratives can be heard in some elements of Western policy commentary as well. The recent Foreign Affairs article by Vipin Narang and Pranay Vaddi is an example of the repercussions of blindly internalizing and internationalizing such fake narratives. The authors have claimed that Pakistan is building intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as an effort to target the U.S., which is not true in the context of strategic evidence.

It appears that the authors are treading in the footsteps of their media stories that even after Palagam had said that Karachi Port was evacuated. One also wonders how such ill-informed narratives make it through peer review. Was it even verified by the editor or any expert on the subject? These fabrications are not minor errors; they are strategic lies with the potential to spark real-world consequences. The international community should be cautious of constructing security narratives using sources that have time and again failed the basic test of reliability. Pakistan has a long history of India-specific deterrence

doctrine as the basis of its nuclear program. It has never developed, deployed, or even indicated interest in weapons with global strike capabilities. Its strategic calculus has always revolved around ensuring that it has a stable deterrence balance with its much bigger neighbor, India. Framing of Pakistan as a threat to the world and the U.S is not only unfairly defining its doctrine, but it also appears to be a cautious attempt at normalizing the growing military and missiles range capabilities of India, which is already being left unchecked. Pakistan has never developed, deployed, or indicated interest in weapons with global strike capabilities. Moreover, these Indian framings of warfare narratives are rarely criticized. Instead, such policy discourse is picked up without often questioning the formulation of Indian strategic discourse promoted by Indian media and political institutions. Not only does this discriminate against more realistic views, but emboldens and encourages New Delhi's growing assertiveness, military and otherwise. Shaheen-III is the longest-range missile in Pakistani arsenals, with a potential range of approximately 2,750 km, which can target Indian mainland areas such as

far as military bases like the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Indian missile force, on the contrary, is expanding in range and ambition.

The Agni-V missile is estimated to have a range of 7,000 to 8,000 kilometers and the under-development Agni-VI is estimated to have a range of 9,000 to 16,000 kilometers. Such ranges are much greater than the need to deter Pakistan, or even China, implying strategic aspirations to the far reaches of global power projection. However, this hegemonic growth is hardly questioned. India is also expanding its military reach in terms of geography. As India continues to gain strategic depth far beyond the historical sweep of the subcontinent with logistical access and military infrastructure appearing in such locations as the island of Agalega, more than 4,500 kilometers beyond Pakistan, New Delhi is gaining strategic depth beyond the scope of its operation in the past. India is gaining strategic depth far beyond the historical sweep of the subcontinent.

This kind of development is bound to cause alarm in Islamabad, as far as the defense strategists are concerned, they

will have to examine new possibilities at the level of deterrence- but not against far-flung states, but against Indian facilities that are being positioned beyond traditional strike range. This is not an act of projection of power but keeping up with the extended reach of India.

Pakistan is not aiming at regional hegemony. Its military developments are directly proportional to Indian developments. Should it increase the missile ranges, it will be purely to make sure that Indian possessions that have moved far beyond the subcontinent are merely within its reach. Even though it has had nuclear weapons for decades, its no-go attitude towards intercontinental ranges speaks louder than any speculation. What is required is a more equal international stance, one that puts India and its missile build-up and strategies under the same level of scrutiny it has tended to put Pakistan. The existing gap in perception encourages media manipulation,

strategic vagueness and escalation. It puts at risk the normalization that the Indian long-range missile program is benign and that Pakistan's defense developments are threatening. The facts speak louder, India is increasing its missile ranges, expanding its military force and its media is disseminating harmful narratives and propaganda. The world has to stop succumbing to the narrative monopoly India has and start posing real questions. Failure to consider this and instead berating Pakistan over its intent without presenting any concrete evidence is not only intellectually disreputable but strategically perilous. When it comes to global stability and just analysis of policy, the world has to stop succumbing to the narrative monopoly India has and start posing real questions. Propaganda needs to be called out, strategic developments, and nuclear doctrines have to be evaluated based on some principles, not on biased opinion pieces.

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Balochistan's Double Burden: The Inhospitable Land and the Unkind Climate

Muneeb Ur Rahman

Environmental concerns are capturing the attention of everyone including the developed and underdeveloped states and are one of the major concerns of the 21st century. Pakistan's contribution to the total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions is one of the lowest in the world and the contribution of the province of Balochistan is almost none. However, Pakistan, particularly the Balochistan province, is among the most vulnerable to climate change. Survival has always been difficult here, because of the rugged landscape, inhospitable terrain, scarcity of water, lack of rivers, and a small population, scattered across a wide area. Now, because of climate change, what is already hard is becoming much more serious, with no space left for any mistakes. It's being felt and it's only getting stronger.

The global trends of climate change can be observed in almost every part of Balochistan. These trends include floods, cyclones, sea level rise, significant increases in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, deteriorating

health, low agricultural and livestock production, as well as animal losses and malnutrition in addition to unprecedented monsoon rains, which result in regular siltation of small dams in some areas. The province's hydrological cycle has changed due to climate change. Rainfall in Balochistan is now irregular and infrequent. Balochistan used to receive three or four rain spells throughout the monsoon season, however, the rains are out of sync lately; either there is an unexpected, intense downpour that causes a deluge, or there is no rain for months. The deficiency of water has increased, and the quantity of water has declined. Quetta experiences a 50 percent shortfall in water supply. Groundwater levels in the province have dropped by 5-10 meters in the last decade, severely affecting both urban and rural communities. The average rainfall has decreased in comparison with the previous 20 years due to which the water table does not get recharged. The water resources are further depleted by water-mining tubewells with no clear

policy for the extraction of water. The province's Karez system has almost dried up due to inadequate groundwater made worse by the effects of climate change. Snow used to fall in many parts of northern Balochistan and high plateaus of midlands. However, over time, both the frequency and intensity of snowfall have decreased rather dramatically. Quetta City has not received snowfall in recent years. Although, the surrounding mountains do receive some snowfall each winter. In past decades, the city used to experience a fair amount of snowfall in the winter and due to its scenic beauty and snow, it was known as 'Little London', which is not the case any longer.

In addition, the changing precipitation patterns and increased temperatures have led to an increased demand for artificial cooling as well. The shortage of water, food security, health risks, and increasing demand for energy may result in climate change-induced migration to the adjacent provinces and could create serious sociopolitical issues and social unrest. The Northern region in the province was well-known for its abundant fruit and dense tree cover which provided

a variety of fruits and the Quetta city used to be called the fruit basket of the country. However, the previous five to six years have seen a significant decrease in the amount of tree cover due to changes in temperature and a decrease in the amount of water available. Some districts of Balochistan are also prone to flooding including Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Lasbela, Jal Magsi, Bolan (Kachhi), Khuzdar, Qila Saifullah, and Qila Abdullah. These areas get floods every year, albeit, the severity varies depending on the region. Each year, severe flooding causes thousands of people to be displaced and affected. The coastline of Balochistan, which is about 70 percent of Pakistan's coastline, is vulnerable to the rise in sea level. This may result in cyclonic activities and saltwater intrusion into groundwater, affecting fisheries, coastal ecosystem, and livelihoods. Balochistan remains disproportionately susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change due to its unique socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities. These are further exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure, limited technological capabilities, and socio-economic constraints. Balochistan must contend

with a dual imperative, addressing the immediate impacts of climate change while simultaneously tackling deep seated structural deficiencies. Emerging threats, such as escalating food insecurity and water shortages. Enhancing Balochistan's climate resilience requires the mainstreaming of adaptation measures into provincial development frameworks, the

strengthening of institutional capacities, and the adoption of inclusive, community centered resource management practices. Investing in clean energy solutions, which represents a pivotal opportunity to mitigate the multifaceted impacts of climate change while advancing sustainable development and improving the socio-economic conditions of the region's population.

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India's Missile Program: Silent Escalation with Global Impact

Usama Khalid

The history of the Indian missile program dates back to the 1960s, while the development in the missile realm began with the establishment of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Although the stated purpose of the missile program, much like India's early declarations about its nuclear pursuits, was to advance space exploration, the dual-use nature of missile technology posed an imminent threat that eventually materialised. The turning point came in the 1980s, when the Indian government launched a comprehensively orchestrated program aimed at developing different missiles with varying capabilities and ranges, as well as their incorporation into the defence structure; the project was known as the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). Led by Dr Abdul Kalam from its inception in the early 1980s until its 2008 completion, this program is considered the cornerstone of the Indian missile industry, providing

critical expertise and blueprints for future missile development initiatives.

Under the IGMDP, India developed five different missile systems: Prithvi, Agni, Akash, Trishul, and Nag. Prithvi was first in the series, which is a tactical surface-to-surface missile with a range of up to 350km. Agni is a family of ballistic missiles whose initial range was up to 1,200km, but later upgradations put it in a destabilising section. Akash is a medium-range surface-to-air missile system used for air-defence purposes, with a range of up to 25km. Trishul is a short-range surface-to-air missile for intercepting low-level targets with a stated range of up to 12km. While the last in this program is the Nag, that is a third-generation, all-weather, fire-and-forget, Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) with a range of up to 20km. The specific purpose of India's missile program remains largely unscrutinised, especially by Western elites who have, to date, extravagantly supported India on this offensively dangerous path of strategic destabilisation. As far as the development of the above capabilities is

concerned, the ranges and the nature of those delivery vehicles, to some extent, justify the program's inherent purpose. However, following the IGMDP, India became the frontline strategic partner of the United States (US) in the region to counter the increasing prominence of China on the mainstream global political stage. In this respect, India was given special favours and received technical support from the US for the upgradation of its military inventories. The 2008 defence deal between both nations was not just limited to the issuance of special Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) waiver to India, but also led to the lifting of export control restrictions under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) which assisted India in getting access to the dual use material for aerospace, guidance system and material sciences, also crucial for the development of ballistic missiles. Moreover, the bans on the DRDO and the ISRO were also lifted as a consequence of the same 2008 defence deal, allowing both entities to collaborate more freely and access global components and technology for the indigenous missile program.

However, these disturbingly destabilising developments by India have been overtly ignored by the Western international community, ostensibly in an effort to establish a counterforce entity vis-à-vis China in the region. But, they have either completely miscalculated or intentionally overlooked the threatening reality because such developments would intimidate the relatively weaker neighbouring nuclear power, Pakistan, in the very same region. International discrimination against Pakistan vis-à-vis India is visibly present, as the world is quite apprehensive of the defensive capabilities of Pakistan, which it has been developing solely for its defence. On the other side, India is on the path of an arms race by developing offensive capabilities such as missiles with ranges going way beyond both Pakistan and China's geographical areas. The Agni-V, India's current operational longest-range missile, falls into the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) category, capable of reaching mainland Turkey in Europe. The Agni-VI, currently in the development phase, is estimated to be equipped with a range somewhere around 10,000km. Another

missile, Surya, will also be in the ICBM category, predicted to have a 15,000km range, and can reach the mainland US and Canada. Crucially, the specific purpose of India's missile program remains largely unscrutinised, especially by Western elites who have, to date, extravagantly supported India on this offensively dangerous path of strategic destabilisation.

Even as recently as 2024, India's first test of a Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) on the Agni-V, its longest-range missile, reveals an intent that goes beyond mere defence. Instead, this signals an offensive

manoeuvring in the region, particularly when viewed against its two nuclear-armed neighbours, Pakistan and China. Strikingly, while sanctions have been imposed on Pakistani and Chinese entities, India's clear trajectory toward an arms race in the region has been largely overlooked. For instance, Pakistan's highest-range missile, the Shaheen-III, with its 2,750km reach, has been misinterpreted regarding the specificity of its threat. Pakistan has consistently and openly stated that its missile and nuclear program is not directed against any nation except India, serving solely as a deterrent against any threat to its survival.

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India's Alarming Military Approach Under Modi

Alamgir Gul

The world does not need an arms race in such a volatile and populated region as South Asia. But with Narendra Modi in the lead, India has been systematically taking the region and in particular, Pakistan, towards the precipice of perpetual instability with its Ballistic missile program and military ambitions. The merger of arms and extremist ideology in the most populous democracy in the world ought to be raising eyebrows among her neighbors as well as the international powers who have been ignoring the problem for a long time. India's missile modernization is not just about defense; it's a political instrument underpinned by ideological militarism. The recent missile tests of India, which have included short-range tactical missiles as well as Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) such as Agni-V, are a demonstration of definite strategic ambitions on its part to increase its military control way beyond its regional presence. Having a range of over 5,000 kilometers, the Agni-V can deliver nuclear bombs to distant continents,

which is why the notion that India is a purely defensive country is also put to challenge. Though India presents such developments as being necessary deterrents, one could not ignore the climate within which context they are developed.

Besides the Agni-V, India has designed a collection of long-range missile systems which are a representation of its ambitions not confined to the regional deterrence. The Agni-VI which is under development will have a range of 8,000 to 12,000 kilometers and this could put the whole world under the firing range of India. Also, K-series of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) including the K-4 and K-5 provide the second-strike capabilities able to travel up to 5,000 kilometers and complement Indian nuclear triad. Such move, though under the pretext of strategic needs, turns more and more troubling in regard to the internal political situation in India, where loud nationalism and extremism are the very agenda-setters in the political rhetoric and military strategy. In combination with the ideologically

motivated militarism, high levels of missile technology have the potential of destabilizing the South Asia subcontinent, as well as the overall international system of security. This is not a form of militarization without context. Hindutva is a national ideal and has influenced the way Modi has modelled India, that how Hindus are supreme over other communities and neighbouring nations, especially Pakistan. A lethal blend of ultra-nationalism and advanced weaponization adds up to a winning formula of disruption in the region. In contrast to the secular basis on which India was built, the vision of the New India propagated by Modi is more inclined to militarized nationalism in which the projection of power ceases to be a purely strategic need but a political instrument. Agni-VI could place the entire world within India's missile range, signaling ambitions far beyond regional deterrence.

To Pakistan, the rising arsenal of Indian missiles and the rising hostility of its military strategy pose a head-on risk. The usage of the so-called the Cold Start Doctrine which involves the quick, small-scale attack within the borders of

Pakistan as well as the use of tactical nuclear-capable missiles such as Prahaar and Pralay have already obliged Pakistan to revise its own strategic positions. Pakistan has time and again voiced its concerns over the arms imbalance in the region, but its warning is usually unheard. The fact is that the modernization of the missile program of India is not only a defense issue but a very aggressive demonstration of power. The intensity of cross-border violence, unilateralism in Kashmir after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A in 2019, and stern words by Indian political and military leaders all are indicative of a greater chaos. As a reaction to this, Pakistan has ensured credible minimum deterrence by coming up with its own nuclear program. Nevertheless, when one half of the border is gaining more and more military activity at a fast pace, stimulated by radical ideology, the possibility of error rises. The spark could be anything, and the impact would be disastrous resulting in the two billion people of South Asia experiencing the onset of a nuclear war.

The policy of India has changed under Modi. It is no longer non-alignment but

strategic aggressiveness. Hindutva as advocated by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a patriarch of the present BJP has virtually become a function of official policy. The exclusion and dominance-based world view alters the defense profile of the country in India as far as peacekeeping force changes to a regional hegemon. The merger of extremist ideology with military might poses an existential threat to peace in South Asia.

Based on the tendency of the government influence, the Indian media is a key source of celebrating military activities and cursing Pakistan. Films, television and even the curriculum in schools are being used as a weapon to create a national culture of glorifying war and demeaning diplomacy. The growth in the Indian military advancements has been supported by the enhanced military relations with the world powers including the United States, France and Russia. Transactions of arms running into billions of dollars still stream into India without much concern to the manner of use of the arms and ideology of the regime wielding the arms. The QUAD alliance which entails the United States, Japan, Australia and India strengthen the

aggressive stance of New Delhi in the region. However, this special treatment is not free. The uncontrolled development of India as a military power with radical shades is capable of undermining the stability not only in South Asia, but also the security of the world. The world cannot afford to ignore these red flags. An arrangement like the one to observe the missile development of North Korea or the nuclear aspiration of Iran has to be applied to India.

International watchdogs and the United Nations should be able to support the transparency of the missiles and nuclear programs in India. The arms control institutions and confidence building measures in South Asia should be reborn at once. The key to strategic stability in the region lies in mutual moderation, dialogue and denunciation of the ideology of militarism.

Moreover, global dominators should realize the fact that peace in the region can never be achieved through staging on one party. Even-handed approach, which accords equal diplomatic status to both India and Pakistan, can open up the platform guiding the long-run peace. The fact that the behavior of India under Modi

is being ignored puts the security of Pakistan, and the world at risk. The world's silence on Modi's militarized nationalism is enabling a volatile arms race in one of the most populous regions on Earth. India under Modi is not that the world used to regard as the country with nonviolent and secular policies. It is a nation that today is developing missiles under the shade of extremism, and the

dangerous ideology is controlling and dominating policy decisions. The global community should do something to prevent it. In case political hatred remains the fuel to military violence, South Asia will turn out to be the epicenter of the next great human catastrophe. It is time to sound alarms before the launching of the first missile.

Publication Link:

<https://stratheaia.com/indias-alarmed-military-approach-under-modi/>

Alamgir Gul

(Research Officer, Balochistan think Tank Network)

Future in Flux: How Emerging Technologies Are Reshaping Pakistan's Strategic Trajectory

Alamgir Gul

In today's quickly evolving digital age, nations no longer achieve supremacy alone by amassing vast natural resources or conventional weaponry. Instead, innovation, control over algorithms, and the clever application of new technologies are increasingly shaping dominance. Pakistan, a country with several internal and external challenges, is presented with both an opportunity and a test of strategic maturity by the digital revolution. Emerging technologies such as blockchain, drone warfare, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and space technology are redrawing the global strategic map. While the United States and China are spearheading this shift. South Asia, particularly Pakistan, is stepping up to the plate with renewed energy. For Pakistan, this shift is not just about keeping up with global trends but also about maintaining strategic relevance in a region undergoing significant geopolitical upheavals.

Pakistan's strategic development has always depended heavily on its

traditional military assets. However, there has been a deliberate move in recent years to integrate state-of-the-art technologies into national military and civic systems. The establishment of Pakistan's first Artificial Intelligence and Computing (AIC) Directorate is noteworthy because it shows the leadership's goal to incorporate AI into war readiness and national security. Furthermore, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan established the National Centre of Artificial Intelligence (NCAI) in 2018 with the goal of promoting domestic AI solutions. This illustrates a wider understanding in Pakistan that in the future, data and code may be just as important in defining supremacy as tanks and fighter jets.

Artificial intelligence is now a practical reality rather than a work of science fiction. AI is being ingrained in contemporary defense tactics, from self-governing surveillance drones to predictive cyber-protection systems. With India's rising militarization and strategic alliances, Pakistan must

continually adjust its posture. AI provides a reasonably inexpensive means of filling in capacity gaps.

But AI isn't solely a military issue. Its use in governance, disaster relief, and public health could transform Pakistan's civil services. Rudimentary AI technologies were employed to oversee lockdown procedures and forecast disease hotspots during the COVID-19 pandemic. These non-commercial applications show how AI can be used to solve developmental issues. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have also attracted a lot of attention in Pakistan's defense modernization strategy. Technological independence is crucial, as demonstrated by indigenous drone programs like Burraq, a military drone created in collaboration with China. But the long-ignored space realm needs just as much focus. Pakistan trails behind India's expanding satellite fleet and successful Mars Orbiter Mission. Reviving the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) is necessary for disaster management, environmental monitoring, and strategic surveillance in addition to scientific objectives.

The Human Factor: Education and Innovation

Without human capital, technology is nothing at all. Regretfully, Pakistan's STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and digital literacy levels continue to be dangerously low. Although COMSATS and NUST are producing high-quality graduates, the volume is not enough. The brain drain is more concerning. The tech industries in Silicon Valley and Dubai are absorbing many of Pakistan's most talented data scientists and cybersecurity experts. Pakistan runs the risk of becoming a consumer of imported technology rather than a producer if it does not invest in research, innovation hubs, and intellectual property protections. On the other hand, India has successfully used its domestic IT industry and diaspora to establish itself as a global tech hub. Pakistan has to follow this example by implementing strong digital entrepreneurship initiatives and offering policy incentives.

The obstacles are undeniable, a fragmented digital ecosystem, bureaucratic lethargy, political unpredictability, and economic

uncertainty. However, these are not justifications for doing nothing. If anything, one highlights how urgent it is to have a single national digital strategy. First and foremost, Pakistan requires a National Technology Security Doctrine that incorporates cybersecurity procedures, AI ethics, and civil-military tech projects. Second, alliances with friends like the UAE, China, and Turkey ought to be set up for mutual innovation rather than reliance. Third, in order to build a robust tech ecosystem that supports domestic solutions, public-private partnerships (PPPs) need to be encouraged. Finally, civil monitoring and openness are essential. Digital ID systems, AI-powered profiling, and surveillance technology are all susceptible to misuse in authoritarian environments. Pakistan needs to strike a

balance between democracy and innovation.

Pakistan is reaching a turning point in its digital history. Its defensive posture and development trajectory for decades to come will be determined by the choices it makes today on emerging technology. Pakistan needs to ensure that it is not left behind in a period when power is increasingly found in code, data, and connectivity, or worse, invaded digitally by others. Today, strategic development encompasses more than just military parades and weapons. It entails cultivating code-savvy brains, building safe systems, and drafting legislation that will set a nation up for success. Pakistan is running out of time, yet the future is still within reach.

Publication Link:

<https://www.wgi.world/future-in-flux-how-emerging-technologies-are-reshaping-pakistans-strategic-trajectory/>

Alamgir Gul

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Military, Mullahs, and the State

Asadullah Raisani

The incidents of armed militants appearing in towns across Balochistan, whether around Khuzdar, somewhere in Kalat, or more recently in Mastung or Surab, are becoming increasingly frequent. Small groups of militants emerge, block roads, check vehicles, burn government installations, and, in a newer trend, loot banks and seize weapons from police or Levies stations before disappearing. In most cases, the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) on the ground surrender without resistance, and the forces dispatched to clear the area often arrive too late, resembling scenes from 1990s Bollywood films where the police never arrive on time. Amid this new trend, a religious extremist group, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), an offshoot of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL/ISIS), has threatened to target nationalist movements, whether peaceful or violent, as their version of Islam considers nationalism to be un-Islamic. However, it is quite evident that their decision stems from a recent violent clash with one of the Baloch separatist

groups. As usual, Islam has become collateral damage in the pursuit of IS-K's motives.

Is this the new normal for the people of Balochistan, for residents of towns like Surab, Khuzdar, Mastung, Kachhi, and Kalat, to live in constant fear of armed militants appearing at any time? Will the banks in these areas, their staff, and the money deposited in them, continue to remain unsafe? Is it good news or bad that IS-K has added groups like the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), both nationalistic in nature, as well as violent separatist groups like the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) to its target list? Above all, where do we go from here? Each of these questions deserves a full-length research paper, and collectively, they could fill an entire volume. However, this brief piece aims to offer a surface-level understanding of these questions and explore the answers that best align with logic.

The answer to the first question is yes, this does appear to be the new normal in

Balochistan. The distance between Mastung and Quetta is only about 50 kilometers, roughly an hour's drive. If both Baloch separatists and IS-K have been frequently involved in terrorist activities in Mastung, it is quite evident that Quetta could be targeted at any time. In fact, there have been two recent incidents in Quetta, in which nearly a dozen people were injured and two lost their lives on the spot. Therefore, it appears to be a matter of chance as to when either of these groups might strike anywhere in Balochistan, including the provincial capital, Quetta. Their presence can be expected at any time, particularly the separatists. However, IS-K is even more ferocious in nature, often targeting large crowds, even in places of worship such as mosques and churches. The answer to the second question also appears to be yes, for now, since looting banks has become a new strategy adopted by a separatist group, BLA. The irony lies in the fact that the bank robbery in Surab was celebrated, as shown in a video clip where, after armed men successfully broke into the bank, bystanders were seen cheering them on. This is deeply concerning, as it suggests, that some locals may have started

viewing these militants as celebrities, whether out of admiration, desperation, or hatred toward others.

While the bank staff have remained unharmed during these lootings, the money kept in these banks is understandably no longer safe. The security systems in place are insufficient to prevent such robberies, and the inability of the security forces on the ground to respond effectively only creates a more favorable environment for these groups to operate. The answer to the third question is neither clearly good nor entirely bad—it appears to contain elements of both. On one hand, the clash between the separatists and IS-K may keep them engaged in conflict with each other, potentially weakening both groups. It is likely that they will expose each other's operational information, which could help prevent future attacks. Their rivalry is expected to intensify with each confrontation, potentially transforming them into fierce adversaries. There is even a possibility that IS-K may begin targeting separatist hideouts in Afghanistan, while the separatists may try to outmaneuver IS-K in areas of Balochistan where they maintain stronger influence and are in greater

command. Nonetheless, the chances for reconciliation between the two are viable. However, these benefits for the state come packaged with certain unavoidable drawbacks. IS-K is a ferocious group that does not differentiate between combatants and civilians, armed or unarmed, children or women, and will seek to attack or damage any nationalist movement that poses a threat to its version of Islam or is un-Islamic for it. Such attacks can cause widespread damage and loss of life, especially since the followers of BYC and PTM are numerous in the province and their freedom to assemble can be curtailed overnight.

The answer to the last question is that Balochistan becomes more complex from here on. The growing challenge to the writ of the state in much of Balochistan, the increasing insecurity of the savings and investments of its citizens, and the deadly clash between two armed militant groups all lead Balochistan toward a seemingly fatal

outcome, at least apparently. In sum, Balochistan today stands at a critical juncture, where the convergence of violent separatism, religious extremism, and institutional fragility has created a perilous environment for its people. The normalization of militant presence, the glorification of unlawful acts, and the inability of LEAs to respond effectively reflect a broader collapse of governance and public trust. While the clash between IS-K and Baloch separatist groups may offer short-term tactical advantages to the state, the long-term consequences of unchecked violence, civilian vulnerability, and ideological polarization are far more alarming. To prevent further descent into chaos, it is imperative for the state to reassert its authority and include the people of Balochistan as genuine stakeholders in their own future. The road ahead is undeniably complex, but decisive, inclusive, and rights-based action is the only way to reverse this trajectory.

Publication Link

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/07/02/militants-mullahs-and-the-state/>

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Mobile Libraries in Quetta for a Smarter Future

Hamza Nasir

While academic libraries exist in Quetta, Balochistan, they do not necessarily contain the technology found in the libraries of other major cities like Islamabad. By adopting mobile libraries in Quetta, students in less developed areas of the city will be able to access information remotely, without feeling the need to physically visit libraries. Mobile libraries offer 24/7 access, research support, and remote librarian assistance, which is crucial given Quetta's transportation issues.

In today's world, digital technology is transforming the way students and teachers access information. Libraries everywhere are using mobile technology to make learning easier, but in Quetta, Balochistan, academic libraries are still behind in this trend. This gap reflects a larger issue in Pakistan's less developed areas, where digital services are not yet widespread. A recent study in Islamabad explored the use of mobile services in academic libraries, highlighting both benefits and challenges. These findings can help educational institutions in Quetta adopt mobile services to improve

access to knowledge and make libraries more efficient.

Benefits of Mobile Libraries Mobile technology has the potential to transform academic libraries in Quetta. With over 189 million mobile users in Pakistan, libraries can use mobile services to provide round-the-clock access to learning materials, support research, and promote teamwork among students.

Research from Islamabad shows that mobile library services have made it easier for students to access information and communicate with librarians without having to visit the library in person. This is especially important in Balochistan, where students often struggle with transportation due to long distances and security issues.

Mobile apps can help students browse library catalogs, get updates on new books, and seek guidance from librarians remotely. Around the world mobile library services are making education more accessible, and if Quetta's institutions embrace this trend, knowledge will become more available to everyone regardless of where they live.

Challenges for Quetta Several challenges prevent the widespread use of mobile services in Quetta's libraries. The study in Islamabad pointed out key issues such as low digital literacy, security risks, financial constraints, and poor infrastructure. These problems are even more serious in Quetta. One major issue is the lack of fast internet. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, many parts of Balochistan still do not have reliable broadband, making mobile library services ineffective for many students. Many librarians are not trained in digital tools, which makes it difficult for them to manage mobile library systems. Without proper training, it will be hard to introduce and maintain these services. Another challenge is that many academic institutions are hesitant to change. Traditional library methods are deeply rooted in Quetta, making it difficult for libraries to switch to digital platforms. There are also concerns about data security and privacy, which discourage institutions from adopting mobile services. The lack of clear policies and institutional support adds to these difficulties, leaving libraries unprepared to adopt modern technology. To

successfully introduce mobile services in Quetta's academic libraries, multiple efforts are required. The research from Islamabad suggests that government agencies, universities, and technology providers must work together to overcome these barriers. First, the provincial government and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) should focus on improving internet access in Balochistan, especially in educational institutions.

Universities must also arrange regular training programs for librarians to improve their digital skills so they can effectively use mobile technology. Collaboration with telecom companies can help by providing discounted internet packages and affordable smartphones for students, making digital access easier.

Addressing security concerns is also crucial. Libraries need clear policies to protect user data and ensure mobile services are safe and reliable. Universities should launch awareness campaigns to inform students and teachers about the benefits of mobile library services, encouraging them to use these tools.

Introducing mobile technology in academic libraries is not just about upgrading systems; it is essential for the future of education in Quetta. By overcoming these challenges and implementing effective policies, educational institutions in Balochistan can bridge the digital gap and make learning accessible to all. The insights from Islamabad's study provide a useful guide showing that with the right support and investment, mobile technology can greatly improve library services in Quetta and create a more inclusive learning environment.

It is also possible to change the image through awareness campaigns. Seminars, orientation, and the use of social media to market the advantages of mobile library services need to be encouraged among universities. Educating students and faculty on how digital tools can improve their learning

process will help it become more acceptable and distributed.

Finally, bringing mobile technology to academic libraries is not just an added convenience, but a requirement of future-ready education in Quetta. Mobility library services would go a long way in mitigating the digital divide. When the stakeholders of the province put their heads together to tackle infrastructural, cultural, and financial issues, academic resources will be within the reach of even the most distant parts of Balochistan.

By considering the positive experiences of Islamabad institutions, the educational institutions of Quetta could take a fresh approach to learning, exchanging, and storing knowledge in the digital world. By embracing mobile libraries, Quetta can take a significant step toward building a smarter, more connected, and more equitable future for its students.

Publication Link

<https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/mobile-libraries-quetta/>

Hamza Nasir

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The Hindutva Republic

Muneeb Ur Rahman

Today, in the 21st century, several Hindus in India are more obsessed with the Islamic emperors of the 17th century than with creating an inclusive future. The symbols of Muslim history are systematically erased, which includes the destruction of mosques, as well as the rewriting of history. The demolition of Babri Masjid, which was replaced by a giant temple dedicated to Hinduism, was only a trailer. What Bollywood has been echoing in its films is already occurring in real life and Bollywood rather than abating it, is only adding to it. Bollywood, rather than abating it, is only adding to it; fictional destruction has become real cultural anxiety. The fictional destruction of the Taj Mahal in the futuristic thriller *Laila*, says a lot about real cultural anxieties. It also leaves one to ask, what will be the fate of the nuclear bomb that the Hindu India reckons it possesses, which was developed by a Muslim scientist in a nation where even the Muslim graveyards and monuments are now being destroyed! The BJP-led New India is carefully returning the identity of India. It not only wants to transform

electoral politics, it wants to deform history, memory, and imagination into a jingoistic narrative of narrow Hindu nationalism.

Muslims are not allowed to make religious festival prayers on the streets, yet Hindu religious gatherings such as the Kawad Yatra, Ganesh Chaturthi, Krishna Janmashtami, Karaga processions, and Navratri celebrations happen in numbers without being questioned. Slogans such as Govinda Govinda are yelled in the streets freely, yet Muslims offering their faith in public are criminalized. Just screaming Pakistan Murdabad is no longer sufficient for Indian Muslims to prove their absolute loyalty. Muslims have to demonstrate their patriotism every time the Indian security apparatus fails. They have to protest on and on to prove that they are worthy to reside.

In reaction to the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Pakistan condemned the action. Muslims in India reacted with the same shock and disapproval across the country. Friday prayers turned into a mourning platform, and demonstrations

were executed across various cities. In a decent democracy, this collective indignation would result in institutional responsibility in the shape of parliamentary investigations, resignations, and reforms. Well, Indian officials redoubled deflection instead. Just screaming Pakistan Murdabad is no longer sufficient for Indian Muslims to prove their absolute loyalty. Within hours, Pakistan was blamed, The Resistance Front (TRF) was spoken of and the incident was framed as yet another example of cross-border terrorism. This story is easy to sell to the international media and serves Indian national propaganda. Sadly, it has become a never-ending circle: tragedy, then hysterical but reactionary accusations, media frenzy, and muted calls to address the weaknesses of the state. This trend impacts the psyche of a country, develops fear, and enforces enmity in the long term. It deflects attention away from security failures in fueling anti-Muslim sentiment. India initiated the staged Operation Sindoor in a bid to shape and control the narrative. Perceiving, making confrontation with Pakistan as simple as a street gang fight. Pakistan was quick to retaliate to a move that was so

irresponsible. Unfortunately, in its rush to win the narrative, India endangered not only its image on the world stage but also its internal integrity.

Violence and vengeance came to the streets and campaigns of hate led to real-life action, anti-Muslim boycotts, hate rallies, and beatings of Kashmiri students and Muslim workers. All those who criticized the security lapse or urged caution in the wake of communal violence were immediately dubbed as traitors. Hindutva extremists were convinced that murdering a Hindu is terrorism but burning someone to death, dismissing them out of work, refusing them residence, or demolishing houses because of their religion is not. Himanshi Narwal, the wife of Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, who was killed in the Pahalgam attack, first bore the brunt of the backlash; she was brutally criticized online when she declined to have the death of her husband used as fuel for community hate and was advised not to victimize Muslims and Kashmiris. As soon as she stopped playing the propaganda game. She in turn received doxxing, sexualized defamation, and harassment by right-wing BJP influencers. The BJP government is

using the media not just for elections, but as a foreign policy tool against Pakistan. The foreign secretary, Vikram Misri, was also targeted on the internet during the same period. His family and daughter were being intimidated and he had to make his social media account private. In the interim, BJP leader Vijay Shah gave controversial remarks, referring to Colonel Sofia Qureshi who had provided the briefing to the press as the sister of terrorists, based only on the fact that she is a Muslim.

The Karachi Biryani restaurant in which, ironically, a Hindu was the owner, was vandalized. One of the videos showed a Muslim boy who was forced to urinate on a Pakistani flag. Other videos of far-right YouTubers bullying Muslims and Kashmiris are endless. These developments have not been condemned by the Indian Prime Minister or the Home Minister and there is no appeal being made of communal harmony. On May 8, over 8,000 Indian accounts were banned by platform X (previously Twitter) at the Indian government's request, followed by FIRs on influencers who challenged the lapses in the security deployed in Pahalgam. The Indian media spread the fire through

fake news. Even the television anchors begin to indulge in fantasies of Akhand Bharat and all kinds of disinformation, and gross lies, including claims that the Pakistani army head had fled, that Islamabad had been captured, that Lahore had been destroyed, that Indian forces had invaded Pakistan.

In one especially upsetting case, a retired Indian Army officer and so-called defense analyst disparaged the Iranian ambassador as a pig, who tried to seek de-escalation between India and Pakistan and visited Pakistan first, an act that led to a formal protest by the Iranian embassy. Irresponsible saber-rattling is not a display of power, but a recipe for disaster in the region.

Globally, India portrays itself as a united force against terrorism. Back home, it enables hate campaigns to run wild. Political interests are at work in the dissemination of misinformation, intolerance, and state-sponsored silence, but at what price? Pakistan is a nation of 250 million people with nuclear weapons. Irresponsible saber-rattling is not a display of power, but a recipe for disaster in the region. India needs to stop destabilizing the region and itself by

opting for dialogue over dogma,
accountability over aggression, and truth
over propaganda.

Publication Link

<https://stratheia.com/the-hindutva-republic/>

Muneeb Ur Rahman

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Israel-Iran War: Who Gained the Upper Hand?

Shahzadi Irum

War is never truly a victory for anyone. No matter who claims to be victorious, it always leaves behind pain, destruction, and broken lives. In the recent standoff, both Iran and Israel were heavily involved, with the US standing firmly behind Israel. All sides have stepped forward, claiming they won, citing their strength or survival as proof. But the real question is: who actually had the upper hand? Was it the side bolstered by overwhelming firepower and strong US support, or the one that, despite facing sanctions, isolation, and limited resources, still managed to resist and stay in the war? First, let's consider Israel—what did it actually gain from this war? Despite its loud claims of victory, the reality tells a different story. Israel went into the conflict under the illusion that it would finally dismantle Iran's nuclear program, but that mission failed. It also sought regime change in Tehran, which turned out to be another complete failure. Perhaps most damaging was the shattering of the long-held myth that Israel is untouchable. For the first time,

hundreds of Tehran's missiles penetrated deep into Tel Aviv, causing hundreds of Israelis to lose their lives, leaving both physical and psychological scars. Israel's advanced defenses – Iron Dome, Arrow 3, and David's Sling – were overwhelmed. The fear, panic, and destruction inside Israel were unmatched, shaking the nation to its core. And the most humiliating blow was when Israel, feeling scared and helpless, rushed to Trump for help, like a kid calling out to an older brother after losing control. It wasn't a display of alliance and confidence; it was a clear sign that Israel couldn't handle the situation alone. That moment showed weakness and prompted Israel to try to drag the US into a war just to save itself.

Now let's turn to the US – what did it really gain by backing this conflict? The truth is, it gained nothing except a damaged reputation and a deep sense of betrayal among its own people. When Trump ran for office, he promised something powerful: "I'm not going to start wars, I'm going to stop wars". Those words gave hope to millions of

Americans who were tired of their country being involved in endless battles. After experiencing the pain of Hiroshima, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, people were exhausted. They didn't want more wars; they wanted peace, stability, and a better image for their country in the world. That's why so many believed Trump and voted for him. They thought maybe, just maybe, he would finally break the cycle. But when this war began, everything changed. Trump didn't stand by his promise – instead, he jumped in. He didn't act to protect peace or people; he acted to protect his own power. In doing so, he threw dust in the eyes of those who believed in him. And now the same people who once saw him as a hope for peace see him as a hypocrite, as his speeches were nothing but empty talk, carefully crafted to win votes. American people feel lied to, used, and humiliated, and that anger won't fade easily. And with that, he didn't just ruin his image, he broke the bond with the people who once believed he was different.

In the case of Iran, it's fair to say: yes, Iran came out on top. It stood tall against two major powers, held its ground, and didn't give in. While its enemies entered the war hoping to crush Iran's nuclear

program and topple its leadership, they walked away without success. Both sides had to settle for a ceasefire, not because they wanted peace, but because they were forced to retreat. The dream of regime change didn't just fail; it became even more out of reach. Instead of weakening Iran internally, this war had the opposite effect: it united the people. Even those who doubted the government supported it, standing shoulder to shoulder against foreign pressure. Iran didn't just survive – it grew stronger, more resilient, and more defiant. The truth is, Iran forced its enemies to taste defeat with every bite. The mission to “wipe out” its nuclear ambitions ended in embarrassment. Iran preserved its dignity, shook the confidence of its enemies, and exposed their limits. It didn't collapse under pressure; it made the pressure collapse on them.

In conclusion, this war was not just about weapons – it's about endurance, willpower, and the ability to fight back when the world expects you to collapse. The country faced two powerful enemies but did not give up. There was no regime change, no nuclear collapse, and no surrender. What was meant to bring Iran down only revealed its strength. Now, the

world has seen that true strength is not but in the courage to stand firm and not
always in loud threats or large armies, fall.

Publication Link

<https://centrefordevelopmentandstability.com/israel-iran-war-who-gained-the-upper-hand>

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Weaponizing FATF

Naseem Sabzal

After a tense conflict, India and Pakistan avoided a nuclear disaster in the region with a ceasefire mediated by the US. Things heated up when India launched an unprovoked attack against Pakistan. The operation, referred to as Operation Sindoor, failed to gain global recognition or any justification for India's aggressive actions. India launched a diplomatic campaign to find some support from the international community, but it too couldn't prove fruitful. Indian media fought against truth, morality, and the ethics of journalism with all its force to manipulate, distort, and kill the prevailing truth. During this war-like situation, the Indian media was also the frontline fighter. However, it fought against truth, morality, and the ethics of journalism with all its might to manipulate, distort, and suppress the prevailing truth. The series of Indian propaganda campaigns did not come under any restriction in the post-ceasefire scenario. Indian media once again has started its usual business of spreading fake news. Linking the global watchdog FATF with an old case from 2020, which falsely accuses Pakistan of

financing ballistic missiles. A sane mind must ask about the relevance of ballistic missiles to the subjects of FATF.

Most of the Indian media outlets are owned by Indian oligarchs. Worth mentioning, the ruling party, the BJP, has close relations with renowned Indian business groups, which control more than 72 TV channels and media outlets. Indian corporate media loses its credibility when it comes to authenticity and transparency, which directly reflects its audience. The audience that cares about real or fake news shows how easy it is in India to influence and shape the public perspective. The recent highlighted case by Indian media is an older case of 2020 when Indian authorities seized a cargo ship which was carrying material used for ballistic missiles, as claimed by the Indian authorities. Linking this case with FATF is the instrumentalization of an international watchdog by Indian corporate media. It is nothing but a disgraceful act of polarizing international technical bodies. The politically motivated Indian corporate media is

trying to hijack diplomatic platforms that serve for common interests of states. Linking FATF with ballistic missiles shows how Indian media attempts to hijack international platforms for political ends.

What makes Indian fabricated claims distorted is the scope of FATF, which deals with money laundering and terror financing. In the case of “Da Cui Yun,” there’s no proof of Pakistan being involved in any financial assistance for developing a ballistic missile. This is a vile attempt to put political pressure on FATF to keep Pakistan on the grey list. The strategic attempt to exploit FATF against Pakistan validates failed Indian diplomacy after the recent Indo-Pak conflict. International bodies should not be allowed to be used for politically driven ambitions of a fascist regimes which threaten regional peace and stability. This is surely true, the BJP government has been using media for political purposes for years, for constructing and deconstructing narratives for elections. But now it is using media to promote an anti-Pakistan narrative as a foreign policy tool. The Modi government’s use of media against Pakistan is not something that unfolds

rapidly or spontaneously; it is a smear campaign of reputational manipulation against Pakistan and international governing bodies, which now tries to hide under the shelter of FATF. Indian media’s campaign discredits FATF and its credibility if it does not resist being cast into controversies. There’s no proof of Pakistan’s financial involvement in the 2020 ‘Da Cui Yun’ case, making the FATF linkage baseless.

After the recent crisis, India’s diplomatic campaign has been to revive its failed foreign policy. With many foreign trips by a delegation led by Shashi Tharoor, a member of the Indian opposition party, and many policy statements. The Indian government is trying to weaponize media with false narratives and manipulative practices. Such attempts hurt the institutional credibility of international forums, which also question their neutrality. FATF operates on the principles of international law to fight against terrorism. The mandate of FATF

should not be used for political or strategic containment against a particular state as a soft power tool. It must act against engineered narratives disguised

in diplomacy for its institutional legitimacy
and integrity.

Publication Link

<https://stratheia.com/weaponizing-fatf/>

Naseem Sabzal

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Indian Manufactured Narrative

Sadia Zahra

In the era of information warfare, international technical platforms are progressively politicized as a tool of scoring points. A recent article by The Times of India headlined that Pakistan has been “called out” by the financial action task force (FATF) over its activities on developing ballistic missiles. Beyond the misleading headlines lies a narrative thick with geopolitical aim and short on credible evidence. This episode shows India’s long time obsession to view Pakistan as a constant security threat and while using international bodies to maximize propaganda. FATF has no mandate to investigate or prosecute states, it operates through peer review on technical compliance. The Times of India hangs its claims on a recent FATF report-but does not mention one main truth: India was the source of information used in the case study of FATF. This is explicitly stated in the report linked here, see on page 53. With the combative attitude India has against Pakistan, no one can anticipate any form of objectivity or goodwill from them. In a situation where a particular state has a

documented interest in discrediting another, the validity of the claims should be doubted

The case study of FATF mentioned has not claimed any state policy connection or the failure in the system by Pakistan. It is a generic typology aimed at explaining difficulties of most states to monitor dual use items. It is more misleading and intellectually dishonest to lay it out as a direct 2-fingered point towards Pakistan. More importantly, FATF has no mandate to investigate or prosecute states. It works on a peer-review basis to evaluate the adherence to technical standards, especially in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) requirement. Arguments that Pakistan was called out overlooks the role of FATF and portrays an attempt to infuse politics into a firm, technical body. Some elements of the story involve the suspected export of autoclaves, which is a dual-use good with civilian uses in many fields: in medicine, farming, and production. which are mainly used in sterilization. It is scientifically weak and politically driven to say that such transfers constitute proliferation of

ballistic missile technology. Dual-use trade among countries such as the West and India occurs regularly on the frameworks to regulate it. The use of a different, biased standard to Pakistan is part of a bigger agenda. Despite the image that Indian media portrays, Pakistan has a strict and transparent export control regime, where the Export Control Act of 2004 and the Strategic Export Control Division (SECDIV) is in charge of licensing sensitive technologies. Pakistan consolidates its national control lists with the international regimes and also files reports once in a year to the UNSEC Resolution 1540 showing that it is continuing to adhere to the non-proliferation requirements.

Instead of admitting these moves, the Times of India article shifts to another convention, linking the recent horrific attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir to Pakistan. These trends of false-flag stories do very little favors to justice or peace. They rather invoke jingoism and divert attention to the internal contradictions of India. Dual-use exports like autoclaves are common globally and not proof of proliferation. Furthermore, the timing of this propaganda is no coincidence but a deliberate effort to divert attention from

the Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic embarrassment at the G7 summit, where his human rights record was questioned because of his foreign interference "Terrorism in Canada", human right abuses during 2002 Gujrat riots, press censorship and the detreating situation in Kashmir. Meanwhile, Pakistan's efforts to facilitate the 2021 Line of Control ceasefire and its calls for dialogue over confrontation have earned international recognition, including the former U.S. President Donald Trump. With global pressure mounting, creating an external scapegoat becomes a convenient distraction for India's leadership.

However, this behavior is not free. The efforts of India to politicize neutral organizations such as FATF threaten to ruin the reputations of the organization itself. International regulatory authorities are supposed to encourage transparency, collaboration, and conformity, not to provide a platform for Vendetta-based stories. Armoring them from a domestic perspective destroys international credibility and threatens regional stability. Pakistan is determined to its adherence to peace, nonproliferation, and international

cooperation. It still maintains a healthy interaction with international monitors and fortification of its institutions. It is not Pakistan, but it is India that is carrying the compulsive desire to blacken its neighbor out of domestic and diplomatic interests. India's obsession with discrediting Pakistan endangers the credibility of international technical platforms like FATF.

Media houses and international organizations must stand up and refuse to be instruments of nationalistic propaganda in the interest of peace in the region and the credibility of the world community. India should understand that it is not possible to establish credibility through distortion. The time has now come to switch off politics of deflection and assume the values of dialogue and cooperation.

Publication Link:

<https://stratheia.com/indian-manufactured-narratives/>

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Exposing a State's Hidden Global Terror Network

Summra Hamid

A critical fact, which the world must no longer overlook, is that, in a more volatile South Asia, nuclear thresholds, cross-border conflicts, and proxy wars are the postulates of geopolitics. India is not just a victim of terrorism but rather has been actively and credibly involved in funding and engineering the same. India is party to everything it is linking to Pakistan, be it the missile proliferation, nuclear security, or terrorism. The illusion of Indian innocence was broken with the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav in 2016. In addition to espionage and assassinations beyond the borders, all the evidence points to a serious and state-sponsored campaign destabilizing Pakistan and negatively affecting the peace in the region. Although these trends are sometimes masked by the West, on account of its strategic interests in India, as a juxtaposition to China, the reality of the situation, as presented by Pakistani officials, the world agencies, as well as even the Canadian intelligence, is too dire to ignore. The illusion of Indian innocence was broken in March 2016 when Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving

officer of the Indian Navy acting as a businessman in Balochistan, was arrested. It was revealed that he had been working near the Chabahar port in Iran to finance and control terrorist cells in Pakistan, mainly in Karachi and in Balochistan, the region already unstable due to ethnic conflicts.

It is to be noted that the terrorist networks that India was taking care of were the ones that it had been accusing Pakistan of. His capture was described by the foreign office of Pakistan as irrefutable evidence of Indian sponsored terrorism. Even Dawn, Indian Express, his file case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), an Indian case file, confirms his background, yet India denies any wrongdoing. But when a uniformed officer, penned in the very midst of enemy territory with forged papers, admits to spying and sabotage, what the world wants more to notice is India's malign activities inside Pakistan.

More than that, during April 2025, ISPR chief Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry disclosed shocking

information about a secret Indian military operation, in which active-duty Indian officers planned terrorism within Pakistan. The brief said that, rank-wise, Major Sandeep, Subedar Sukhwinder, and Havildar Amit were planning attacks in Kotli and Jhelum. These were no generic accusations, but were backed up with names, taped conversations, and patterns of attack. One of the cases among many other cases found to be caused by this network was the case of Jaffar Express hijacking that resulted in the loss of civilian lives and even aggravated the trauma suffered. This kind of open warfare under the disguise of the use of proxies is precisely what India is accusing others of doing, yet it acts via a state-sponsored mask of plausible deniability. India is guilty of, or worse than, what it accuses Pakistan of.

Also, in May 2025, a school bus was bombarded in Khuzdar, Balochistan, as they were carrying children. Even though the international community was highly critical of the assault, there were no international peace agencies that subjected India to accountability. Though it is evident based on secondary reports, which indicated that Indian-sponsored outfits to instigating communal violence

and civil disturbances. Go back to 2020, when the Karachi Stock Exchange was attacked. Though the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) had taken responsibility, Prime Minister Imran Khan accused India and stated that it had targeted them by activating sleeper cells to conduct the operation. Former National Security Advisor (NSA) Moeed Yusuf had quite direct words in blaming India but had also stated that the operation had failed. In addition, a leader of BLA also stated that they received Indian Aid against Pakistan. The daring and the time of the attack, in the financial capital of Pakistan, had all the earmarks of a state-synchronized operation whose purpose was to cause as much symbolic as well as economic harm as possible.

Such Indian affairs in terrorism are not restricted only to Pakistan but have gone to the international level. Even Canada, which always maintains a low profile of diplomatic tone, has been quite prominent in raising their voice against Indian transnational assassinations on Canadian territory. Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) held India among those committing extrajudicial killings and foreign interference,

especially in the murder of Sikh leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. More than this, even the latest Iran and Israel war, most of the intelligence and terror spreaders were the Indians who worked with the Israeli forces against Iran. Although India claimed them to be based on unfounded claims, the similarity with what Pakistan has been accusing for a long time is a revelation. Pakistani leaders as well as Kashmiri activists now say that India has been sending the same death squads to operate within its territory, as it is claimed to be doing in the Western democracies. ISPR disclosed taped evidence of Indian officers planning terrorism within Pakistan.

Whereas the international community remains silent when it comes to the spread of terrorism by India, not only in Pakistan but also around the globe. Just like Israel doesn't require the suggestions of US in its decisive attacks around the globe, similar policies are being followed by India, and the world remains silent as it continues to do so until the Israeli wars started affecting them too. Different questions may be posed when it comes to global policies and relations. However, the bigger question remains: Is India turning into the

new Israel of South Asia? The world may not realize it now but since Israel no longer even listens to the US India would not want to do the same and the world peace would become world chaos or to providing an advantage and not protesting to those people who are causing the terror and forming such organizations and blaming other states on this.

The strategic discourse of India, as the largest democracy struggling to cope with terrorism, is well-financed and well-designed. However, Pakistan, with its issues, has continuously drawn the eyes of attention over the destabilizing activities being carried out by India, and it has also taken a firm hand in combating the war on terrorism that has never been a headache to Pakistan, but a spillover effect caused by the US actions in Asia. The international community needs to do away with the two-sided framing. In case of preserving peace in the region of South Asia, India should be put to the test, namely through international pressure, sanctions, and multilateral dialogues. The margins are too high to remain quiet. The recent war between Pakistan and India further proves Pakistan's sensible decision-making and

timely actions. Pakistan has always been responsible, with no history of nuclear theft or accidental missile drop on a neighbor's territory, but it keeps happening on India's part. It is evident that India keeps provoking Pakistan for a war, yet Pakistan prefers regional peace and is still blamed for activities that are caused by the war waged. India is establishing a monopoly of victimhood while operating a covert global terror network.

Though India always complains of Pakistan being the center the destabilizing and facilitating terrorism. It is to be noted that India itself remains in the mesh of such actions and activities.

From the practice of covert operations and the proxy war to political assassinations and militancy beyond borders, India is guilty of, or worse than, what they accuse Pakistan of having done. Such hypocrisy has illustrated a rather worrisome tendency. New Delhi is trying to establish a monopoly of victimhood in the international arena, but at the same time, in the shadow, it is taking rather violent and destabilizing courses of action. The dual approach in this way may not only cause the erosion of trust but also strengthen the critical review of every actor in the region, those geopolitically considered as inconvenient.

Publication:

<https://stratheaia.com/exposing-a-states-hidden-global-terror-network/>

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Pakistan's FY 2025–26 Budget: Strategic Shift or Shortfall?

Hamza Nasir

Hamza Nasir critically analyzes the newly announced budget for FY 2025-26, examining its implications for fiscal policy, defense spending, industry reforms, and macroeconomic direction in light of the IMF program and recent regional tensions. The article provides a timely assessment of whether the government's strategy represents a meaningful shift or simply a stopgap measure. On June 10, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the budget of 2025-26 in the National Assembly against a backdrop of soaring nationalism after the recent Pakistan-India skirmish. Against its grim background, the budget aims at a tricky balance: aggressive fiscal consolidation in line with IMF requirements, a little bit of middle-class tax relief, and an economic shift to growth. The stock market reacted with great gusto-PSX touched a new all-time high of over 124,000, as investors showed optimism in its core. However, is there more than a morale boost behind the figures?

Fiscal Consolidation Growth

Briefly, the FY26 budget is contrastingly different from the expansionary budget of last year. The gross expenditure has been cut by approximately 7 percent to Rs 17.573 trillion as compared to Rs 18.9 trillion. The fiscal deficit has now been limited to 3.9 percent of GDP (it was 5.9 percent previously), and a primary surplus is estimated at 2.4 percent. This contractionary movement is a condition dominated by the IMF and is aimed at regaining macro stability.

In contrast, the previous year's budget was severely criticized due to imposing heavy new taxes on consumers, including 18 Percent GST on all agricultural produce of immediate need, rental income, seeds, and tractors. Despite the increased revenue, it put pressure on households and could not trigger sustainable growth. The budget 2025 appears to do an about-turn with a sense of relief, especially for the salary earners, but nonetheless squeezes the national financial machinery.

Salvation of the Salaried Class
Harmonized with Limits

In an attempt to cushion the austerity measures, the government came up with a middle-income Rs 600,000-1.2M half-rate income tax band, lowered the surcharge on high-income earners, and declared that there will be no rise in capital gains tax CGT. It will stay at 15 percent.

Investors liked these measures, as PSX reached new highs and workers, although the gains are modest so far. Although tax relief is pro-consumption, critics say that it is shallow. It is apparent that the strategy of this Budget is greatly dependent on the increase of revenue (FBR target: Rs 14.13 trillion, an increase of approximately 19%) that is based on the more comprehensive reform of agriculture, real estate, and retail. However, when only 1.3 percent of Pakistanis are paying their income tax in FY 25, these reforms might not be enough unless heavily enforced.

Defense Spending: The Elephant in the Room

The budget proposes a sharp 20 percent increase in defense outlay to Rs 2.55 trillion in response to the recent India conflict. Together with pensions, military expenditure today takes up

approximately 19-20% of the federal budget and almost 2.5% of GDP, which is equal to the regional peers. Part of this is funded by a reduction in interest payments (down 16%) as the central bank rates are reduced (from ~22% to 11%).

In 2016, defense was also notable but not in a spike. The adaptation to this increased burden is now the big question that may leave the sectors of development starving. Health, education, and infrastructure remain second fiddle, an alarming indication of long-term human capital investment.

Industry Push and Structural Reform

To make up the fiscal deficits, the finance minister has announced bold tariff reforms. Customs duty has been reduced or eliminated in more than 4,000 tariff lines, covering raw materials and intermediates to make production cheaper and encourage exports. This is in line with the so-called East Asia moment, in the hope that Pakistan can follow the path of other export-led development models such as Vietnam or South Korea.

It also has real estate and construction incentives, low-cost housing tax breaks,

and improvements in the public sector development program (PSDP). The IT industry will get about Rs 4.8 billion to gross exports of US\$3.1 billion to a target of 25 billion in five years. They are indicators of a more focused, future-oriented economic policy. But the package that passed last year (supply-side reforms without tax hikes) was not specific. The move to couple relief of obligations with industry assistance that is being attempted this year is more subtle but still depends on implementation.

Market Response and Sustainability Concerns

Markets clearly liked what they saw. The KSE-100 index surged approximately 1.922 percent or more after the budget, and it ended at over 124,300. Stability in capital gains, favorable tax structures on mutual funds, and the absence of surprise taxes are some of the reasons attributed by analysts to explain the rising sentiment.

However, institutional confidence cannot just lead to results. The high projected growth rate of 4.2 percent GDP growth rate, which is expected to improve on the anticipated 2.7 percent growth in FY 25,

which was itself revised downwards to 3.6 percent, already casts a doubtful eye. Last year, the agriculture and manufacturing sectors performed poorly, and structural bottlenecks need to be rewritten; otherwise, growth will remain unattained.

Last Word: Pare or Bluster?

Unlike the tax-heavy, expenditure-heavy budget of last year, the budget of FY 2025-26 claims a more balanced stance: fiscal tightening, tamed incentives, sectoral thrust, and strategic reforms. It gives a slight consolation to those who earn salaries and draws a reformist, export-led story. It can be reassuring to exporters, investors, and even expatriate Pakistanis overseas right now.

Yet to bring this about, three things are necessary:

1. Discipline of Implementation: Expanding the tax net in agriculture, real estate, and retail, and delivering on tariff liberalization.
2. Re-prioritization of Development: Reducing military and debt-service demands to create fiscal

room to spend on health, education, and infrastructure.

3. Structural efficiency: Simplifying industrial policy, giving a push to SMEs, increasing housing finance, and utilizing the IT boom.

Should Pakistan be able to perform in these areas, then this budget could well be the one that turns it around. Unless reforms are undertaken and austerity cuts are preceded by growth, it will be in danger of being no more than a financial Band-Aid: stabilizing, perhaps, but not transformative.

Publication:

<https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/budget-2025-26/>

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Pakistan Dismisses ICBM Claims, Slams India's Expanding Nuclear Ambitions

Zafar Khan

It is imperative to counter the ongoing propaganda in several regional and international non-peer-reviewed newspaper outlets and magazines—including Foreign Affairs—that claim Pakistan is developing an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). Ironically, none has produced credible evidence of any development, testing, or deployment of such a strategic asset. In today's globalized world of high-speed communication, high-resolution satellites, and remote sensing technologies, it is virtually impossible to conceal a credible missile test. No evidence has been presented to support these claims. Despite this, the saturation of baseless speculation in these so-called analytical pieces is both irrational and illogical, reflecting intellectual dishonesty and a lack of educated, integrated opinion-making on critical matters such as the alleged ICBM threat from Pakistan. This not only undermines the credibility of these outlets but also of the authors who perpetuate such fearmongering narratives.

Pakistan adheres to a policy of full-spectrum deterrence within the framework of credible minimum deterrence. India-specificity remains the linchpin of Pakistan's nuclear strategy. Full-spectrum deterrence does not necessarily imply an increase in the number of warheads and delivery systems, as often misunderstood in the West. Rather, it refers to covering a broad range of targeting options—both countervalue and counterforce—against a potential adversary, namely India. It is important to recognize that any posture of credible minimum deterrence is inherently dynamic and adjusts in accordance with changes in the strategic environment. To date, the longest-range missile that Pakistan has successfully and credibly tested is the Shaheen-III, with a range of 2,750 km. Its rationale is widely known: it is designed to reach the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where India has stationed strategic assets that pose a threat to Pakistan and the broader region. U.S. ICBM Allegations Against

Pakistan Reflect Strategic Bias, Not Real Threat

In the wake of India's flawed military misadventures during both the 2019 and 2025 conflicts with Pakistan, it would be wise for New Delhi to reconsider its hubristic approach towards South Asia

The Shaheen-III is correctly classified as a Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM). Pakistan's nuclear posture is strictly India-specific and seeks to ensure that its deterrent remains credible. There has been no debate, no strategic signaling, and no doctrinal shift indicating a Pakistan-specific posture against any other state, including the United States. Therefore, the assertion that Pakistan poses a threat to the US and its allies is unfounded. On the contrary, it is notable that these commentaries often omit mention of India's continued development, testing, and deployment of long-range ICBMs—with ranges up to 16,000 km—both land- and sea-based, thereby posing a genuine global security threat. Moreover, India has already developed significant capabilities in fissile material production, enabling the expansion of its nuclear arsenal across sea-, land-, and air-based platforms.

Whether this build-up is security-driven or prestige-oriented remains a pertinent question. It may be argued that India harbours aspirations of regional hegemony. This ambitious strategic force posture, coupled with its drive for great power status, reflects its intent to assert dominance and potentially push out external powers, including the United States and its allies, from the broader Indian Ocean Region. India's strategic outlook, shaped by its "Act East" policy, increasingly seems to treat the Indian Ocean as its exclusive sphere of influence.

In international politics, capabilities are critical—but intentions can change overnight. Today's ally can become tomorrow's adversary. Within the realist paradigm, there remains the possibility that India could, in a future US–India conflict, threaten the United States and its allies using its ICBMs equipped with nuclear warheads and Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs). Nuclear and international politics are inherently unpredictable. States retain certain military capabilities to deter future threats. Those that relinquish such capacities, as Ukraine did, often find

themselves vulnerable in the long term.
Why A Nuclear War Between India And
Pakistan Could Destroy The Region And
The World

In the wake of India's flawed military
misadventures during both the 2019 and
2025 conflicts with Pakistan, it would be
wise for New Delhi to reconsider its
hubristic approach towards South Asia.
There is little India can achieve through
military aggression, apart from
undermining regional stability. Instead,
credible confidence-building measures

through political and diplomatic
channels, particularly on core issues
such as Kashmir are the need of the
hour. Pakistan has repeatedly expressed
its willingness to engage on these
matters. The question remains: is India
ready to reciprocate? Perhaps it will take
time for India to climb down from its
ladder of hubris and work sincerely
towards de-escalation. Pakistan remains
prepared for dialogue across all
spectrums. The world now watches when
and how India will respond to this
imperative.

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Targeting Pakistan's Nuclear Credibility

Ali Abbas

The Cold War rivalry between the US and the former Soviet Union was marked by proxy conflicts and the credible threat of nuclear retaliation, which prevented a direct military confrontation.

Both powers developed Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) by the late 1950s, significantly reducing the likelihood of war. An ICBM, by definition, can deliver a warhead over 5,500 kilometres, establishing a nation's second-strike capability and serving as a deterrent against full-scale conflict.

Strategic military decisions, particularly those involving ICBMs, require clear doctrines, defined missions, political resolve and technological readiness. In the aftermath of the Iran-Israel conflict—sparked by Israel's unfounded fears of an imminent Iranian nuclear threat—many Indian academics and analysts have turned their attention to Pakistan, launching baseless allegations regarding a supposed Pakistani ICBM program.

Historically, foreign concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program revolved around fears of proliferation to non-state actors like the Taliban. However, through

effective internal safeguards and responsible stewardship, Pakistan has successfully countered such narratives. Despite this, a new smear campaign has emerged, now focused on an alleged and unsubstantiated ICBM development.

Unlike the bipolar strategic competition of the Cold War, Pakistan harbours no global hegemonic ambitions and maintains a defensive, India-centric nuclear doctrine. It enjoys cooperative relations with the US, particularly in counter-terrorism efforts and does not perceive global powers as existential threats. Developing ICBMs would serve no strategic purpose and only invite international scrutiny, hampering Pakistan's legitimate missile and nuclear programs.

For comparison, China's expansion of its ICBM arsenal is grounded in concerns over a potential US first-strike. Pakistan's leadership has never made such an assessment, nor is there any official doctrine supporting such capabilities. Additionally, Pakistan still seeks self-sufficiency in satellite and space launch technologies, both critical prerequisites

for developing an ICBM. Even if Pakistan possessed space launch vehicles, mastering the complex re-entry phase—where a warhead must survive hypersonic speed and extreme heat—is a separate and more advanced challenge. No credible intelligence, even from adversaries, indicates Pakistan has achieved this.

India's own overt ICBM development, driven by its self-proclaimed global ambitions, poses a more tangible threat to regional and global stability. Its shift toward preemptive counterforce doctrines raises legitimate concerns. Yet,

alarmist narratives about Pakistan's intentions ignore these developments and reflect a biased and irresponsible academic stance.

Such disinformation efforts are part of India's broader fifth-generation warfare strategy aimed at discrediting Pakistan's credible and responsible nuclear posture. Publishing unverified claims not only undermines academic integrity but risks creating mistrust among states that otherwise maintain constructive relationships.

Publication Link

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Prestige Above Security Requirements

Alamgir Gul

India's journey from a post-colonial nation to an emerging global power has captured the attention of many around the world. Its immense economic growth, technological expansion, and aggressive foreign policy indicate that a new strong participant in the international arena is born. But behind this, there is a question that matters: Is the strategic program of India driven by the need for security, or is it driven by prestige? The pattern of Indian defense and space programs, nuclear policy, and activities in the region indicates the latter and indicates a relatively more interested state in the symbolic power than peace in the region. India's development of long-range missiles exceeds its regional security requirements, signaling global power projection. The most important of these signs is the fact that India is incessantly developing long-range missiles. Its initial missile projects concentrated on fighting off local threats posed by neighboring countries, but its recent acquisition is much more than what it requires. A range of more than 5,000 kilometers of the Agni-V and

projected developments of Agni-VI with a range up to 12,000 kilometers are irrelevant in the South Asian security environment. These intercontinental ballistic missiles have multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) technology that is aimed at global power projection, and not directed towards peace, and threatening the stability of regional deterrence.

India's pursuit of prestige carries serious risks. Its ambitions extend well beyond security, pushing Pakistan, despite economic and internal struggles, into a tough choice: accept India's dominance or try to keep pace. This fuels mistrust, escalates the arms race, and increases the chances of dangerous missteps in the region. In 2024, the defence budget of India was \$73.9 billion, which made it the third in the world in terms of the number after the United States and China. This massive spending is not only to utilize traditional security roles, but it is also used to finance aircraft carriers, ballistic missile protection, space-based monitoring, and computer attack capabilities. Even as modernization of the military is a sovereign prerogative,

the magnitude and extent of such activities are well beyond what is necessitated by the immediate security needs of India. Nationalist politics under Modi blur the lines between strategic needs and symbolic military actions. Domestic politics play a crucial role in this transformation. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the line between strategic needs and nationalist identity has blurred. Incidents like the 2019 Balakot airstrikes and the 2025 Pahalgam episode were not just military responses. They became tools for electoral gain and symbols of a broader nationalist narrative. India's actions now go beyond defense; they promote a vision of a resurgent, Hindu-centered nation reclaiming past glory, both at home and abroad.

The result of this change has uprooted the regional order. Pakistan has acted to ensure greater nuclear deterrence, Sri Lanka and Nepal have slowly been drifting towards Beijing in reaction to harsh Indian diplomacy, Bangladesh show fear of India who takes control over the South Asian forums and dominates SAARC, which used to be the brightest regional organization on the chart of the continent, is currently

incapacitated mainly by the unwillingness of India to get involved multilaterally in its relations with Pakistan. Rather, India advances such alternative institutions as BIMSTEC and the so-called Indo-Pacific Quad, which undermine South Asian solidarity and repackage the Indian identity in terms that focus rather than on the immediate neighborhood but on the broader Asia Pacific region. Such changes are not at a cheap cost to India. India spends very much on projects of prestige in defense by neglecting human development projects. India has also been ranked in a low position in terms of the Human Development Index, whereas its health, education, and gender disparity are very glaring, despite India being among the largest economies of the world. Millions of Indians lack clean water, power, and basic medical attention, while it is full steam ahead with satellites circling above and submarines patrolling the oceans. A disparity between the world ambitions and the national reality of India shows the distorted priorities in which the symbols of power are valued over the quality of life of the citizens. India's aggressive posture fuels mistrust and arms races, undermining South Asian

cooperation. Additionally, the hostile attitude of India poses a threat of the isolation of the country in the long term. The trust around the region is gradually diminishing, and anyone who is a neighbor is becoming less certain of what New Delhi is up to. Instead of being a harmonizing agent in South Asia, India is perceived as a hegemonic power willing to subdue. Such an image erodes the soft power of India and restricts its cooperative leadership potential. When the state in question wants to have a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, such mistrust becomes a major diplomatic drawback. India's aggressive military posture in a volatile region poses serious risks. As a smaller neighbor, Pakistan's focus is on survival, not competition, but India's growing dominance forces it to respond. This arms cycle deepens insecurity; blocks dialogue and threatens peace across the region. The region of South Asia, with an

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approximate population of two billion inhabitants, can afford another arms race. There is an urgent need to have regional cooperation, economic integration, as well as building trust. To achieve this, India needs to take a look at its reasons. It has to question whether, in the pursuit of prestige, which manifests itself through missiles, megaprojects, and military parades, it is serving its people or simply appeasing a nationalist self. Despite economic growth, India's social indicators lag, revealing skewed priorities favoring military prestige over human development.

The greatness of power is not measured by the range that their missiles possess and their ability to control their power. A sustainable rise of India should be based on regional cooperation, strategic restraint, and the development of humanity, instead of a blind thirst for prestige.

Emerging Global Madness

Alamgir Gul

From the ruins of Gaza to war-torn Ukraine, from Kashmir's tensions to the fires in Iran and Israel, the world is increasingly led by those who lack empathy, restraint, or a sense of duty. Leaders today often show a chilling disregard for human life, twist facts without shame, and cling to power with no remorse. This is no longer just political rhetoric or abstract critique—it is a harsh reality and a global crisis. The modern age promised progress, cooperation, and diplomacy, but instead, we see rising violence, unchecked authoritarianism, and the erosion of laws meant to protect the vulnerable. Ordinary people have become pawns in power struggles, while those with the loudest weapons act without consequence. One of the most heart-wrenching examples is Gaza. Since the escalation of the Israel-Gaza war in October 2023, more than 60,000 Palestinians have lost their lives. The majority of them were women and children; entire families have been wiped from existence. Hospitals have become targets, and refugee camps have been flattened. Essential supplies like water,

food, and medicines are deliberately obstructed.

Israel claims self-defense, a right no one can deny, but the scale and nature of its response go far beyond defense. The disproportionate violence, the systematic targeting of civilian infrastructure, and the collective punishment of over two million people amount to something far more sinister. These are not isolated incidents of war; they are patterns of cruelty, and the world's hesitation to act speaks volumes. The silence of institutions and the apathy of those with influence have only deepened the despair. The airstrike launched by Israel on June 13, 2025, under the banner of Operation Rising Lion, sent shockwaves across the world. It struck suspected nuclear and missile facilities in Iran, killing IRGC commander Hossein Salami, two nuclear scientists, and several civilians, including children. Yet, no credible evidence suggested Iran was on the verge of building nuclear weapons. Even the U.S. intelligence did not verify the claim. It is an act, devoid of evidence and circumscribed with consequences, and this is a dangerous

mindset, putting control over conversation and revenge over examination.

Such tit-for-tat can take the region over the edge. A full-scale war with Iran and Israel was not only going to bring the Middle East in its entirety to war but also introduce the possibility of the involvement of world powers and light a new chapter of devastation to international conflict. The war in Ukraine is another gloomy instance of this emerging global madness. An invasion took place in February 2022, bringing about one of the bloodiest wars in the history of modern life. Sheltered cultural and commercial centers where people lived well are burnt to ashes. It is all about the attempts of a leader to rewrite history under the auspices of claims of security and sovereignty.

And there is India, a country usually referred to as the largest democracy in the world, yet currently heading toward a worrying path. With the abrogation of the Article 370 in 2019, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu and Kashmir lost its special autonomous status, followed by one of the harshest lockdowns in living memory: tens of

thousands arrested without any charges, months-long internet shutdown, and the environment that lumped speaking out to sedition. The cold hush that has fallen on Kashmir is not the hush of peace, but it is the silence of fear driven by compulsion. In the larger context, the posturing of India has become more aggressive. Fueled by the Hindutva ideology, rhetoric against Pakistan has become more inflammatory, and border skirmishes more frequent. These provocations do not emerge from genuine threats, but from political utility. In a region where both nations possess nuclear arsenals, such deliberate escalation is a gamble with unthinkable stakes. Looming over all these crises is the stark failure of international institutions. The United Nations, once the world's moral compass, is increasingly paralyzed. The Security Council, dominated by permanent members with veto powers, has become a tool for obstruction rather than action. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court investigates selectively, and only where geopolitics permits. The result is a world where international law is not universal, but conditional. The strong act with impunity; the weak are punished with precision.

However, there is a face behind every statistic and policy choice. Under the debris, a child is holding their parents. A father observes his house burn to the ground. Abstractions are not what they are; these are lives, full of stories and dreams, that were obliterated because they were viewed as collateral damage by someone, somewhere. Strategy turns into cruelty, and people become barriers to political ambition when there is a lack of conscience in the leadership. Yet, this descent into barbarism is not irreversible. There are ways forward, if only we have the courage to take them. The structure of the United Nations must evolve; the veto power must be reimagined with a more inclusive and democratic mechanism. Modern technologies, especially artificial intelligence, can be

harnessed to detect signs of impending conflict, providing an opportunity for prevention rather than reaction. Nations fueling wars through arms sales must be held accountable through enforceable legal frameworks. Peace processes must shift focus from elites and militaries to those most affected, civilians, and those who bear the scars of war. Most importantly, education across the world must be transformed to cultivate empathy, teach the true costs of violence, and build a generation capable of saying “no more” before the first bullet is ever fired.

The choice remains ours. And what we choose today will echo through history for generations.

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Alamgir Gul

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India's Flawed Deterrence Doctrine: A Catalyst for Conflict, Not Stability

Alamgir Gul

According to India's military and political establishment, Operation Sindoor was a strategic inflection point in Indian deterrence policy. According to the proponents of this model, supported by the Indian strategic community, it is largely perceived that the Indian Integrated Deterrence, as a combination of military force, diplomatic, economic, and information warfare, would serve to prevent Pakistan's use of sub-conventional aggression or aid of non-state actors. This is wrongly misjudged and misperceived. Yet, this story is convenient to miss many historical and present realities, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, this story contravenes international law and destabilizes the region and encourages state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. Operation Sindoor's integrated deterrence failed to curb cross-border terrorism, escalating regional instability. Integrated deterrence applied by India in Operation Sindoor has failed to curb the so-called cross-border terrorism; it has led to a rise in tensions

in the region. The idea that calibrated aggression would deter Pakistan presupposes a simple, one-sided perspective on deterrence, which fails to take into consideration Pakistan's ever-changing posture and strong response capabilities.

One of the foundations of India and its integrated deterrence is its reputed informational superiority, which is defined not by the actual information advantage but by narrative power. It has always used global media outlets to define the discourse of events and subdue legitimate counter-discourse. Worst of all, is the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, who is a serving officer of the Indian Navy, arrested in Balochistan in the year 2016 as he carried out his espionage and sabotage missions on behalf of the Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). The denial of the presence of its intelligence officer in an operation on Pakistani territory reduces the moral credit of India and supports the claims by Pakistan that India sponsors terrorism in Pakistan. On the same note,

India has kept spreading unfounded allegations and information about the terror attacks in Pakistan without presenting verifiable information. Such a strategy of disinformation negates the integrity of its diplomatic activity and weakens trust in the region. Besides, the fact that India secretly sponsors terrorism in Balochistan. Furthermore, Economic coercion as a form of so-called integrated deterrence through efforts to control the Indus Waters Treaty amounts to a blatant violation of international law as well. The Treaty of 1960 by the World Bank has survived the test of time, including the wars, and this is largely because water is not a weapon, but a common human commodity. India is not only weaponizing a humanitarian resource but also creating the threat of an ecological and humanitarian disaster in the region by threatening to block water flows or speed up the hydroelectric projects against the will of Pakistan. India's narrative power often suppresses legitimate Pakistani perspectives and denies espionage activities like Kulbhushan Jadhav's arrest. A full spectrum deterrence within the ambit of credible minimum deterrence-based nuclear doctrine of Pakistan is an anchor

of stability in the region. There have been provocations and provocative identification of doctrines, like India has on its part a doctrine referred to as the so-called Cold Start, yet Pakistan has so far shown restraint and strengthened deterrence through sound management of the nuclear arsenal.

On the other hand, India is developing its missile and nuclear program as fast as possible, with the intention of creating MIRV-capable missiles and the possibility of implementing hypersonic platforms. This change leads to significant concerns among security experts around the world. Without the credibility of a No First Use (NFU) policy, which has been pointed out by the observers at the Stimson Center to be more of a problem in India, specifically since under this policy, after the recent inflammatory political rhetoric, India has opened up a strategically ambiguous space and brought the possibility of instability as well. Misconceived and hazardous is the thought that India can be capable of dealing with and control escalation, regarding the nuclear overhang. History and strategic logic indicate that in such a contentious region as South Asia, it is less of a promise than

what one can say about escalation control. In a nuclearized climate, there are major dangers of miscalculation and accidental escalation that accompany limited war strategies, particularly those that entail cross-border incursions. Furthermore, the idea of the “conditional clarity,” which is advertised by the Indian strategists, cannot give much confidence. It only passes the buck to Pakistan and empties the question of responsibility and diligence of the domestic fringe players within India, and the upcoming craze of Hindutva-induced home-grown terrorism, like mob lynchings, persecution of minorities, that may cause the next crisis. The reality is that the concept of integrated deterrence pursued by India has less to do with fighting terrorism and more of coercing Pakistan by multi-domain pressure methods. Instead of bringing stability to the region, this doctrine is bringing greater volumes of instability to an already weakened regional environment. Far-fetched unilateralist position, abnegation of international law, financing proxy rebels in Balochistan and KP, and

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furthermore, the mismanagement of essential agreements all demonstrate a forceful, not a defensive, policy course. Weaponizing the Indus Waters Treaty as economic coercion violates international law and risks humanitarian disaster.

The only next step out of this is credible dialogue, mutual threat reduction, and rejuvenation of the diplomatic regimes like the Composite Dialogue Process, albeit the ultimate objective of peace and deterrence is really at the heart of the relationship. On numerous occasions, Pakistan has demanded meaningful encounters on the principle of sovereign equality and respect. India has had a long illusion that the means of deterrence is domination in case something is in earnest to achieve the objective of peace. The real deterrence is a two-way net, and it is only sustainable when both sides realize that they should not only satisfy themselves that their security is taken care of but also agree to settle any differences through diplomacy, not through the diplomacy of violence.

India's Nuclear Obsession

Shahzadi Irum

The world today seems to be caught in a strange race, not to build peace, but to develop bigger, more lethal bombs. Nuclear weapons, once considered a last resort, have now become symbols of power and pride. Countries treat them like trophies, believing that the more they possess, the greater their respect will be. It is like people showing off fancy cars or expensive watches, not because they need them, but to attract attention. The concept of deterrence is often viewed as a means to maintain peace. However, in reality, it often acts as a convenient excuse for asserting dominance when genuine threats are lacking.

Nowhere is this obsession more apparent than in South Asia, where India seems convinced that nuclear weapons are the shortcut to global prestige, mistaking the power to destroy for the power to lead. In the name of responsibility and restraint, India portrays itself as a stable nuclear power. Yet its actions tell a different story. With expanding stockpiles, the development of advanced missile systems, and increasingly assertive rhetoric, India's

nuclear ambitions seem driven more by the desire to project strength than by the need for security. What we observe is not strategic caution but a calculated assertion— an appetite for dominance wrapped in policy. And it is a path that risks escalating tensions, undermining regional stability, and pushing others to follow suit. New Delhi's persistent pursuit of nuclear dominance, disguised as self-defence, has become more dangerous, driven by ambition and strategic arrogance. What started with the so-called "peaceful" nuclear explosion in 1974 has now developed into a stance that seems less about protection and more about provocation. With each new test and policy change, New Delhi moves further from restraint, pushing South Asia toward instability and raising concerns well beyond the region. As one wisely puts it, "The most dangerous countries in the world are not those with the most weapons, but those most obsessed with having them". India fits this warning all too well. Doctrines like "No First Use" may project themselves as responsible, but behind them lie a growing arsenal, an

expanding missile programme, and quietly deepening partnerships, especially with Israel. At a time when the world desperately needs diplomacy over destruction, India's nuclear behaviour sends the wrong message: that fear commands more respect than peace. Such a trend is particularly alarming for vulnerable, less secure nations that may seek to do the same.

The country's expanding arsenal of lethal and sophisticated weapons, including the Agni-5 with MIRV technology, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and pursuit of hypersonic nuclear-capable systems, reveals a reckless and dangerous obsession — one that exceeds logic and necessity. With each new missile test, nuclear upgrade, and high-tech military purchase, it fuels a false sense of supremacy. These weapons, rather than preventing conflict, increase tensions in a volatile region. Why? Because deterrence requires balance, dialogue, and restraint—all of which are absent from India's aggressive military stance. These vast nuclear programmes aren't just about self-defense; they are part of a deliberate plan to dominate South Asia and secure a position among global

powers. This pursuit of prestige comes at a cost, especially for neighbouring countries. By racing to keep up with China, India is also intimidating and forcing smaller states like Pakistan into an arms race they can barely afford. The image of India as a responsible nuclear power no longer holds, especially under Modi, whose government has cloaked nationalist ambitions in the language of defence. But these weapons don't stop at the borders. A heavily armed India sends shockwaves far beyond South Asia—its aggressive stance threatens to destabilize regions as far away as the Middle East, Europe, and parts of Africa. What we are witnessing isn't deterrence—it is a ruthless and arrogant power grab that the world can't afford to overlook.

India's fascination with weapons is a calculated effort to crown itself as the uncontested leader and dominant power of the region, more powerful than any of its neighbours, determined to crush any rival that dares to stand in its way or question its authority. This obsession is not driven by genuine security concerns but by an aggressive desire to claim a throne on the global stage, regardless of how destabilizing, provocative, and dangerous the consequences may be.

The world must urgently unite against India's dangerous nuclear obsession — just as humanity pledges to stand together against extraterrestrial threats, it must now face this real and growing danger on Earth. India's unchecked buildup of advanced weapons is expanding like a fierce flood, and its neighbouring countries are the only barrier holding it back. These neighbours, through resistance,

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deterrence, and regional balance, are the last line of defence slowing India's march toward unchecked dominance. But if the barrier breaks— if India succeeds in overpowering them, no one can predict where this surge of militarism and aggression will go next. This is not just a regional issue; it's a global warning. The time to act is now, before this obsession leads to destruction.

The Shadow Market in Nuclear Material and International Inaction

Summra Hamid

The civilian and military nuclear program of India has captured the attention of the world since it became a nuclear power outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Issues of nuclear security in India especially the incidents of nuclear material thefts have raised concerns regarding the safety of Indian nuclear infrastructures and program. Some of the critiques have given indications that India may be involved in strategies or even dangerous nuclear experiments on an international front this is commonly known as a nuclear gambit. India has experienced multiple significant nuclear material thefts over the decades, exposing vulnerabilities in its security apparatus.

Cases of nuclear material being stolen in India are of great concern, as they show the weakness in the nuclear security setup of India. Such lapses may even have disastrous outcomes like the development of radiological dispersal device by the non-state entities which is likely to threaten both India and the global community. These threats are compounded by the absence of any

autonomous nuclear regulation organization and the poor security standards at nuclear power stations, as observed by the international zone monitors such as Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) that ranks India very low in terms of nuclear security implementation. It has been found that there is a worrying tendency of nuclear material theft in India, some of which have been on a large scale in the last few decades. To give some examples, in a criminal gang sneaked out was several kilograms of semi-processed uranium. In 1998 theft of 100 kg of uranium used in mining complex Jadugoda, was caught trying to sell it to Australian federal politician. In 2001, two men were caught in possessions of more than 200 grams of uranium. Similarly, in 2003, 225 grams of milled uranium was seized from a jihad group who were planning to wrap them around explosives. In 2008, Low-grade uranium was smuggled to Nepal, with the help of the son of one of the employee in the Atomic Minerals Division.

In the year 2009 a nuclear reactor employee used security lapses to poison workmates with radioactive isotope.

Back in 2013, Leftist guerillas acquired uranium ore, which was loaded on explosives to make bombs, and was apprehended by the police. The depleted uranium that was apprehended in Thane in 2016 is estimated to be smuggled out of one of the Gulf countries. In 2021, 7.1 kg (15 lb) of natural uranium was confiscated off two men in Maharashtra, worth about 2.9 million. And in 2024, 50 grams of stolen radioactive material that was valued at 100 million were confiscated and three people were taken into custody. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) lacks full autonomy, weakening nuclear oversight and control.

The theft is still continued in India. Unlike in Pakistan where there is not even a single theft or irresponsible state behavior was recorded or reported by the national or the international community, this proves that Pakistan is determined in its nuclear safety even despite the world terming it as a terrorist sponsor but at least Pakistan is more secure than the state whose nuclear is freely and easily accessible to terrorist groups and separatist elements like, India. Excluding the theft or losses of non-nuclear weapons, SASSI documents 18 events in

India between 1994 and 2021 of thefts and loss of more than 200 kg of nuclear material, including uranium. Such cases show a repeat of an activity, and some materials are believed to have been smuggled to the neighboring countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh. The numerous occurrences of such incidents are indicators of the vulnerability of the Indian nuclear security system. The Indian Home Ministry released a report in 2013 showing that Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) responsible to protect the nuclear installations was reportedly understaffed and ill equipped, and were not enough trained.

The standards and protocols of nuclear security in India was identified as weaker than in Pakistan and Russia by the U.S. intelligence (insider threat issues, security of transport, and control of materials). Under the Department of Atomic Energy, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) is not fully autonomous and hence its effectiveness is affected as compared to the international standards, such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, which requires stringent domestic regulation of nuclear materials. Such weaknesses have raised

the possibility of these stolen nuclear materials, being used in a radiological dispersal device (RDD), also known as a dirty bomb, which can have a serious impact on people assuming that a group of terrorists obtains them. Although not directly applicable to nuclear weapons, some of the materials confiscated like natural uranium, are suspected of posing a serious threat because they can be found in the black market. The global nuclear gambit of India suggests that this engagement of strategic or risky behavior on an international front would compromise the nuclear safety and export of nuclear technology in irresponsible hands. Stolen nuclear material could be weaponized in radiological dispersal devices, posing regional and global threats.

In order to resolve the issue of the domestic security, India ought to focus on

reinforcing its nuclear regulatory framework, making the AERB independent and improving the physical protection of the nuclear plants. Best practices and joint security reviews may also be supported through international cooperation to enhance the struggle of India against nuclear theft. Although the international community has not made much noise about the failures in India in regard nuclear security, more monitoring and assistance is likely to reduce the challenges faced. To sum up, although India has major problems with protecting its nuclear material, it does not seem to be engaged in an unsafe or criminal nuclear policy on the world level. India can enhance its role of being a responsible nuclear power by solving its security problems and by helping in the global non-proliferation endeavor.

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Why Missile Defence Like the Iron Dome Undermines Strategic Stability

Zafar Khan

The apparent success of the Israeli so-called defensive system, the “Iron Dome”, in the recent Israel–Iran conflict has unnecessarily convinced many security analysts—including United States President Donald Trump—of the need to develop their own version of the Iron Dome. This has been dubbed the “Golden Dome”. For example, Matthew Kroenig, an American security analyst and a member of the recent Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, argued that “for decades, critics have argued that missile defences do not work, but the facts have changed. Missile defence technology has greatly improved in recent years.” Kroenig further asserted, “The world has witnessed the remarkable success of Israel's Iron Dome system, which successfully defended Israel against massive Iranian salvos of missiles and drones.”

Reflecting this sentiment, Trump signed an executive order titled “The Iron Dome for America”, announcing a next-generation missile defence shield to protect all US territory against potential adversary attacks. He had already stated in January

2025, “Ronald Reagan wanted to do it many years ago... We didn't have the technology then... Now we have phenomenal technology. You see that with Israel, where out of 319 rockets they knocked down just about every one of them. So, I think the United States is entitled to that.” However, there are several plausible factors why serious strategic thinkers remain unconvinced by such an imperative. First, the geographical area of Israel is small enough to be protected by a layered combination of deployed defensive systems.

Second, Iran's missiles had to traverse vast areas, including multiple countries and parts of its own territory, before reaching their targets. Third, in the defence of Israeli territory, the United States and its allies played a significant role in intercepting incoming Iranian missiles, even before they reached Israeli defences. Finally, most of Iran's offensive missiles were relatively slow and weak in trajectory, with only a few possessing hypersonic capability that could challenge Israeli systems.

Many security analysts have warned of a

false sense of security when it comes to ballistic missile defence systems, especially against more sophisticated, long-range, nuclear-capable missiles. Offensive countermeasures, such as hypersonic weapons and Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs), can penetrate even the most advanced deployed defensive systems. Crucially, such systems have not yet been tested in real time against these emerging threats. India may be able to protect select parts of its territory, but it remains implausible that it could shield the entire country, despite its investments in costly defensive infrastructure. Even if defensive systems achieve a high interception rate, say 90 percent, the remaining 10 percent of incoming long-range, nuclear-capable missiles successfully striking their targets would be strategically unacceptable. From a strategic calculus perspective, the offence–defence framework suggests that offensive systems are cheaper and more effective than defensive ones. In this regard, the defence remains both weaker and costlier.

Since the United States' withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002, it has continued to invest

billions of dollars in the development and deployment of ballistic missile defence systems. However, these systems have not yet been tested under real-time conditions against highly sophisticated offensive countermeasures, which are explicitly designed to defeat them. With increasing economic capabilities, countries such as the United States, India, and Israel have been pursuing expensive strategic ventures aimed at acquiring both a “shield” to protect themselves and a “sword” to strike their adversaries. First, they risk accelerating arms races, increasing crisis instability, and raising the chances of conflict escalating. Second, countries possessing defensive systems may undergo doctrinal shifts in force posture. This could lead to a temptation to strike first, emboldened by misplaced confidence in the protective shield, thereby increasing the risk of miscalculation and escalation. Third, adversaries whose second-strike capability is perceived to be undermined may feel compelled to develop more potent offensive capabilities designed to penetrate or overwhelm defensive systems.

For instance, neither China nor Russia is convinced by the US justification that its

withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and subsequent missile defence developments are aimed solely at countering threats from non-state actors. Both countries are believed to have developed advanced offensive systems and countermeasures specifically designed to defeat American and allied missile defences.

A similar dynamic is visible in South Asia. Pakistan has already developed sophisticated countermeasures—emphasising speed, range, penetrability, and lethality to defeat India’s deployed missile defence systems. While India may be able to protect select parts of its territory, it remains implausible that it could shield the entire country, despite its investments in costly defensive infrastructure. This dilemma is likely to extend to other states aspiring to develop or procure missile defence systems. For every new technology, counter-technology emerges. Nuclear-armed states with limited economic

resources may opt to invest in effective offensive systems specifically designed to neutralise their adversaries’ defensive capabilities.

Preventing The Next War: A Roadmap for India-Pakistan Peace and Stability

In sum, it is not a viable long-term strategy to continuously invest in expensive missile defence systems that may never fully protect a country’s territory. Instead, such systems may place direct strategic pressure on adversaries to develop powerful countermeasures, fueling a spiralling arms race. Unless some form of strategic restraint regime is institutionalised to discuss, manage, and ultimately resolve such issues, the fallacy of relying on ballistic missile defence systems will persist. Only through meaningful dialogue and strategic stability frameworks can rivals hope to reduce risks and avoid catastrophic miscalculations

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The Duplicity of Rules-Based International Order

Shah Meer

Stephan Walt, a leading American expert on international politics, once rightly remarked that what America exports is not liberalism, but the illusion of a rules-based order that it never truly followed itself. The rules, norms, and international regulations are what provide legitimacy to the order and appeal to smaller and greater powers. However, being the building blocks of the order, the US, the champion and staunch advocate of the liberal order – has a long history of violating and selectively applying international norms. Those who can serve the subjective interests of the West are objectively exempted, and those who assert themselves for their security and survival which may help reduce Western dominance are outlawed. In this broader strategic malpractice, the Western media, the US-led organizations, and every accomplice of the US are entrancedly indulged.

This phenomenon of duplicity is evident in the latest American conduct during Israel-Iran war. Arguably, safety and security and the international norm of 'not attacking nuclear facilities is a

fundamental principle of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Any attack on such facilities is interpreted as a breach of international law, as it can result in severe nuclear contamination. The UN charter also forbids the use of force against another country's territorial integrity unless in self-defense or authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Despite having no imminent military threat from Iran, with the help of 125 US military aircraft, including B-2 stealth bombers, the US attacked Iran's three nuclear facilities: Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan, violating the core principles of the NPT, IHL and the UNSC.

The US media is also involved in this campaign of severe duplicity. The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), a leading US-based platform, last week published an opinion which encourages such measures against Iran. It argues, "Those who argue that Israel should live with a nuclear Iran should look no further than India's bitter experience with its nuclear-armed neighbor, Pakistan". It also advocates to roll back Pakistan's

strategic program. It accuses China of providing tested nuclear bomb blueprint. Additionally, it subjectively declares Pakistan's strategic program the worst national security blunder of India. It ignores India's own nuclear tests. Arguably, its analysis falls short of empirical and impartial rational data and fails to grip the regional security dynamics: that Pakistan's nuclear test was in response to India's nuclear tests, a country which was conventionally stronger than Pakistan yet preferred to go nuclear. Though the author claims that India's nuclear tests were a response to China as the former was conventionally insecure and preferred asymmetric response, but there are evidence which show that India started to develop nuclear weapons program even before the Chinese nuclear test. India was the first to nuclearize South Asia and continues to modernize its military capabilities.

Another fallacy the column bears is of irrelevant comparison between Iran and Pakistan. The strategic cultures, the threat perceptions, and the policymakers of both countries are different in many senses. Pakistan's responsible behavior with nuclear weapons, especially in the

Balakot Crisis and Operation Bunyan Marsoos depicts its commitment to global norms. Pakistan is a democratic country with robust decision-making and accountability mechanisms and is not motivated by a hardline approach. Despite facing cross-border terrorism and geographical proximity with Jihadists in Afghanistan, its nuclear assets are safe under a vibrant command and control structure.

The hawkishness in the essence of the opinion is unprecedented. It justifies preemptive strikes on countries, allowing violation of territorial integrity and breach of sovereignty, which is a clear violation of International Law. Radicalization, war and escalation are legalized unless it diverges with Western interests. This analysis ignores the very fabric of norms on which the entire global order rests.

The concealment intent of Western media is also evident from Israel's inhuman actions and genocide in Gaza. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) notes that more than 50,000 children were reportedly killed alone since the start of the war, and 2.1% of the 2.3 million pre-war population were

reportedly killed. The Western media justifies these killings by saying that the war was triggered by Hamas and Israel only responded to the attacks which have caused massive destruction. They forget Israeli usurpation, its violation of the partition plan, and its illegitimate expansionism.

George Kennan reminds us that moralism and legalism in foreign policy are always self-defeating and self-destructive. Moral utopianism has often

been weaponized to undermine the lawful and legitimate concerns of the states. The so-called liberal order is mired in rules that do not apply equally to the weak and the strong. Therefore, global resentment has intensified in the shape of China's rise, Russian resurgence, and assertion of middle powers like Iran and North Korea. This growing backlash signals a deepening crisis of credibility and legitimacy in the so-called liberal order.

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India's Nuclear Black Market: A Threat to All

Sadaf Nadeem

India's journey as a nuclear power has always been unique, operating largely outside the global non-proliferation framework. After its first nuclear test in 1974, India faced international sanctions and was a primary reason for the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). However, in 2008, a controversial, country-specific waiver from the NSG granted India access to international nuclear trade without it having to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

This special treatment, intended to bring India into the mainstream, has inadvertently created a dangerous reality: a vast nuclear program where many civilian facilities remain outside mandatory International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. This structural weakness (gap), arising from its historical path, has created a high-risk situation for nuclear security. The consequences are now alarmingly clear, manifesting in a series of thefts that suggest the presence of an active nuclear black market. Over the past two decades, India has witnessed a

concerning number of documented cases where uranium and other highly radioactive materials were stolen or went missing. For instance, in 2021 alone, 6.4 kg of uranium was seized in Jharkhand, and 7 kg of natural uranium was confiscated in Maharashtra. Perhaps most shockingly, authorities in Kolkata seized a staggering 250 kg of what was believed to be Californium, a substance far more radioactive than uranium. More recently, the seizure of 50 grams of highly radioactive material in Bihar on August 10, 2024, estimated to be worth \$100 million, highlights the scale of the problem. These are not minor lapses; the quantities stolen are sufficient to build multiple radiological "dirty bombs." As security analysts have noted, these recurring events are not just random crimes but indicators of a systemic failure that calls into question New Delhi's control over its nuclear materials.

Furthermore, this problem is rooted in a lack of international oversight and a flawed domestic regulatory structure that has failed to secure its nuclear material.

As security analysts have pointed out, these recurring incidents suggest an active nuclear black market and "call into question the measures taken by New Delhi for the safety and security of nuclear material." Another key weakness lies in India's unique and privileged position in the nuclear world. As a non-signatory to the NPT, a large part of its vast nuclear program remains outside the scope of international oversight. With many of its civilian nuclear facilities still not under the mandatory IAEA safeguards, a significant portion of its nuclear material remains in a gray zone, to hide it from the international community's checks. Internally, the system is flawed by design. India's top regulatory body, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), is not truly independent. It operates under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), the very government body it is supposed to regulate. This creates a clear conflict of interest, where the developer of nuclear energy is also its watchdog. This institutional weakness is reflected in the high number of safety-related incidents. According to a report, between 2004 and 2023, about 650 nuclear safety incidents were reported, a number that reveals a

risk-prone environment where small failures could easily escalate into a catastrophe.

On the other hand, the threat is magnified by pure geography. Several of India's key nuclear facilities, such as the Kaiga Power Station, are located in remote areas that are also hotbeds for insurgents, including Naxalite militants. These groups have a long history of violent conflict with the state. The proximity of highly sensitive nuclear materials to organized and violent non-state actors drastically increases the risk of a targeted attack or theft, bringing the terrifying possibility of a "dirty bomb" falling into terrorist hands much closer to reality.

Defenders of India's nuclear capabilities often point to its centralized Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) as proof of its robust control. However, a top-down command structure is meaningless if the system is being compromised at the ground level. The facts speak for themselves. As one Indian security writer openly says, "The Indian nuclear safety and security system has been penetrated... three times in four years is a clear indication of serious issues. A

security chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and India's has been repeatedly weakened.

This is not a regional problem that the world can afford to ignore; it is a global crisis in the making. Nuclear material does not recognize national borders. A security breach in India could empower a terrorist organization on another continent. A single dirty bomb detonated in a major global city like London, Tokyo, or New York would not only cause immense loss of life but also create widespread panic, cripple economies, and render parts of a city uninhabitable for decades. India's problem is, without a doubt, everyone's problem. The era of polite diplomatic silence has passed. The world needs to act with speed. The IAEA should be granted the authority to conduct comprehensive, mandatory inspections of all of India's civilian

nuclear facilities, not just a select few. The NSG must instantly revoke its special waiver until India can demonstrably match international security standards. In addition, financial monitoring bodies, such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), ought to aggressively examine any money trails associated with such illicit nuclear trafficking.

In the final analysis, India should be treated just like any other nuclear state. It needs to be moved to sign on to the NPT and to entirely reform its internal regulatory bodies to guarantee real, independent oversight. The present model, opaque and repeatedly compromised, is no longer sustainable. The world simply cannot afford to wait for the next dirty bomb to go out. The pattern is evident, the dangers are increasing, and now is the time for accountability.

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Expansion of Indian Sea-Based Capabilities

Pairman Bazai

India's nuclear doctrine has been cloaked in the rhetoric of "No First Use" and "credible minimum deterrence." But recent developments, especially in its sea-based nuclear program, suggest a drift away from regional deterrence to a more ambitious global strategic reach. According to an Indian defense analyst, Commodore Anil Jai Singh (Retd.), "The addition of warships and submarines is for the replacement of the old platforms with those equipped with modern and improved technologies. These additions are also to cater for renewals." With the expansion of its nuclear submarine fleet, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and ocean surveillance capabilities, India is quietly yet steadily stepping into the club of global nuclear powers without the scrutiny or accountability that usually accompanies such a transition.

India currently operates two SSBNs. The SSBN-I, INS Arihant (formally commissioned in 2016), which can carry up to 12 K-15 Sagarika SLBMs (750 km range) or 4 K-4 (3,500 km) missiles, completed its first 20-day deterrent patrol

in November 2018, marking full nuclear triad operationalization. The SSBN-II, INS Arighaat (commissioned August 2024), is capable of equipping both the K-15 and the longer-range K-4 SLBMs. The INS Arihant was initially portrayed as a stabilizing tool to complete India's nuclear triad. Yet the induction of a second SSBN, INS Arighat, and the development of longer-range SLBMs like the K-4 and upcoming K-5 missiles, capable of targeting beyond Pakistan's territory, signal a recalibration of India's deterrence architecture. Moreover, India launched its third and fourth SSBN, the INS Aridhaman, in 2021, which is undergoing sea trials and is reported to be commissioned in 2025. This more advanced SSBN has 8 launch tubes carrying K-15, K-4, or future K-5 (ranges 6,000 km) missiles. Additionally, India is planning to build the next-Gen SSBNs (SSBN-V), the larger SSBNs (13500 tonnes), which are designed to carry up to 12 long-range SLBMs (like K-5 or K-6) up to 6,000 km.

According to the Indian news platforms, India is also planning to expand its naval assets, as it has proposed shipbuilding projects that include 17 warships and 9 submarines awaiting approval, alongside 61 vessels under construction, with major projects like Project 17B, Project 75-I, and Next Generation Corvettes. These projects are expected to cost over 2.4 trillion Indian Rupees or approximately 28.74 billion USD, which is a huge amount allocated for naval shipbuilding. Furthermore, New Delhi plans to replace the over-aging platforms, especially submarines and destroyers, with more modern ones to reach the Indian Navy's goal of a 175-ship fleet by 2035. Notably, these are not strategic projects or systems not merely aimed at gaining strategic advantage over India's rivals in South Asia—China and Pakistan—but represent a pursuit of power projection in the wider Asia-Pacific theater, where India has long held ambitions for dominance.

India's growing naval nuclear capabilities reflect a substantial maritime militarization posing serious threats in the region and beyond. Its SSBN deployments could destabilize South Asia by undermining deterrence stability

and triggering an arms race at sea, especially among nuclear states of Asia. It will also erode nuclear non-proliferation norms, setting a precedent that undermines global disarmament and increases the risk of miscalculation in future India-China or India-Pakistan conflicts due to the inherent fog-of-war associated with submerged SSBNs. India's opaque strategies and lack of transparency in its military policies further fuel global suspicion. It is hard to ignore that India's expanding nuclear inventory contradicts the principles it claims to uphold. "Minimum deterrence" is a flexible term, but when a country fields multiple SSBNs, develops new generations of SLBMs, and enhances surveillance infrastructure to protect its nuclear assets, the line between deterrence and strategic overreach becomes blurry. With no official cap on its arsenal and no participation in any arms limitation regime, India's nuclear posture raises uncomfortable questions about double standards in the global non-proliferation order.

What makes it even more alarming is the silence of the international community. India remains outside the Nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but continues to receive waivers and strategic indulgence from global powers. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) exemption in 2008, largely pushed through by the US, normalized India's status as a de facto nuclear weapons

state. Today, its unmonitored expansion in sea-based nuclear assets remains unchallenged, even as it increases risks of regional instability, thereby posing the question of why the West remains silent on such developments.

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Pakistan's Nuclear Program and the Ongoing Slander

Harsa Kakar

On June 18, 2025, The Wall Street Journal published Sadanand Dhume's opinion piece titled, "Iran's Nuclear Pursuit and the Pakistani Example," leaving analysts in a disappointing bewilderment. The piece first advocated military actions against Iran's nuclear pursuits and then unfairly defamed Pakistan's Nuclear Program. The piece was broadly aimed at framing Pakistan's nuclear program as a destabilizing agent, ignoring Pakistan's security threats and its necessity and strategic rationale behind going nuclear in the first place, and thus avoiding the whole geopolitical context behind it. This piece seeks to counter those false accusations and the biased opinion in regards to Pakistan's nuclear program and the article's depiction of Pakistan as an impulsive nuclear power.

Developed in the late 1980s and tested officially in 1998, Pakistan's nuclear program has been linked with terrorism, instability, and proliferation in the article. which is a biased and misleading rhetoric, avoidant of an essential nuclear history, and seemingly 'unaware' of the fact that Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear was

not a belligerent act but was compelled by its rival neighbor's nuclear pursuit in 1974. Pakistan shares a history of Indian aggression and wars with India, as evident in 1947, 1965, 1971, including the recent clash of 2025 as well. Pakistan's nuclear program is India-centric, for its defense and deterrence, and to ensure survival. Unlike Iran, which has not yet developed nuclear weapons, Pakistan's program was a direct reaction to a clear and present danger. To portray Pakistan's nuclear arsenal as a reckless endeavor ignores the stabilizing role it has played in South Asia, where mutual deterrence has arguably prevented large-scale conventional wars between India and Pakistan since 1998.

The accusation that Pakistan's nuclear program was built on "theft, charity, and clever diplomacy" oversimplifies a complex process and unfairly maligns Pakistan's scientific achievements. Dhume omits the broader context of global nuclear proliferation during the Cold War. He also seems to omit that the geostrategic standpoint of Pakistan in the Soviet Afghan war also gave it enough

diplomatic posture to run its nuclear program without further opposition from the eastern countries. Moreover, China's assistance, while significant, was part of a broader strategic partnership, not unlike the technological transfers that have occurred between other allies globally. Pakistan's nuclear program required significant indigenous effort, scientific expertise, and national resolve, which Dhume dismisses in favor of a sensationalized narrative.

It is falsely claimed that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal enables "death by a thousand cuts" through support for terrorism is a gross exaggeration. A stat report of the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database estimates 4,000 deaths in India from 1990 to 2020 attributed to Islamist terrorists, lacks nuance. Many of these incidents predate Pakistan's nuclear tests, and the complex dynamics of militancy in South Asia cannot be reduced to state-sponsored terrorism. Pakistan has itself been a victim of terrorism, with over 80,000 casualties from militant attacks since 2001, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. The suggestion that Pakistan's nuclear status emboldens terrorism

ignores the country's efforts to combat extremism, including military operations like Zarb-e-Azb, which significantly weakened groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Furthermore, the 2005 London bombings, cited by Dhume, involved individuals of Pakistani descent, not state-directed actors, and linking such acts to Pakistan's nuclear program is a rhetorical overreach.

Moreover, the portrayal of Pakistan as a proliferation risk is outrightly untrue and biased. Pakistan has implemented robust command-and-control mechanisms, including the National Command Authority, to secure its nuclear arsenal. The U.S. State Department's 2023 report on nonproliferation acknowledges Pakistan's efforts to align with international nuclear security standards, contradicting Dhume's insinuation of ongoing recklessness. The fear of jihadists accessing fissile material, while a concern, is speculative and not unique to Pakistan that similar risks exist in other nuclear states, yet Pakistan is singled out.

The article then asserts that Pakistan's nuclear program is "too far along to be easily ended" implies a missed opportunity to prevent its development,

referencing a failed India-Israel plan to strike Pakistan's nuclear facilities in the 1980s. This narrative ignores the catastrophic consequences such an attack would have had, including regional escalation and global condemnation. India's restraint, according to the article was not a "national-security blunder" but a pragmatic decision to avoid war with a determined adversary. Pakistan's nuclear deterrence has ensured its sovereignty, forcing India to engage diplomatically, as seen in the 1999 Lahore Declaration aimed at fostering peace. The argument that it was purely a liability to Pakistan to become a nuclear state is very short sighted and fails to take into account that it has brought a balance of power in South Asia. Comparison between Iran and Pakistan further gives distorted ground realities since the article does so. Pakistan is not the same as Iran. Iran which is yet to be a successful nuclear state is closely monitored by the IAEA and is a signatory of NPT has an alternative strategic ecology that is driven by a confrontation with Israel and the US. The nuclear weapons of Pakistan on the contrary are a responsible production in a quite different strategic culture. It is India

specific. That the weapon of Pakistani should fall in the hands of its religious clerics as Dhume jokes out to be true in Pakistan military is ridiculous and untrue. Even after Pakistan has gained nuclear, there has never been any threat by them towards this end. Whatever concern the US administration ever had in this regard was actually about the Ballistic Missile Program of Pakistan and it was not because of the US threat perceptions but it was actually the reason that emanated about the program on regular strategic assessments.

In summation, the article by Dhume is a lopsided argument that portrays the nuclear program of Pakistan inimically as a threat to the whole world neglecting its defensive nature, strategic importance and the measures taken by the nation in ensuring security of its weaponry. The terrorism and proliferation charges are overstated, based upon old or cherry-picked facts. Even though dangerous, Pakistan nuclear program is not a cautionary story but testifies to the value of deterrence as a means of securing the country. Instead of continuing extolling narratives that brand its strategic options demonic, the international community ought to be engaged in matters

concerning diplomacy and nonproliferation systems, which have been the case in Pakistan and the global nuclear regimes.

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India's ICBM: The Prestige Imperatives

Ali Abbas

India became part of the now seven countries to field operational Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) when it first tested the Agni-V ICBM in 2012. Subsequent tests of the missile were conducted from 2013 to 2018. This development has cemented India's position in an exclusive club of countries that boast advanced technological wherewithal to a degree – after all, ICBMs are the epitome of ballistic missile development, serving as the ultimate stage of the technology in its current phase.

Although India has caught up with the technology and has succeeded in developing and deploying ICBMs, it has been unable to provide a solid rationale for it. Other states that possess operational ICBMs include the United States (US), Russia, China, United Kingdom (UK), France, and North Korea. By examining the rationale for the aforementioned countries, there is a degree of similarity in their rationales, which is dominated by the discourse on security and long-range power projection. The US, UK, and France have

an adversarial relationship with Russia and harbour deep suspicions about China as well. With Russia, the rationale goes back to the beginning of the Cold War when the bipolar world order committed the NATO leading states to deploy ICBMs as a credible strike option to be used in the event of a direct war of nuclear dimensions with the erstwhile Soviet Union. Being separated by thousands of miles thus merited the development of strike weapons that covered continental ranges.

On the other hand, Russia, China, and North Korea consider an all-out war with their adversaries in the western hemisphere as a credible possibility for which they continue to make preparations. The rationale, therefore, lies in securing oneself from long-range aggression and presumably undermining the US and its allies' global military footprint. China, for example, may rely on the use or the threat of using its ICBMs against any third party that may seek to militarily intervene in its affairs with Taiwan. It is implicitly understood that the threat is directed to Taiwan's

western allies, i.e., the US and NATO. North Korea has also made it clear, in no uncertain terms and with an added layer of explicitness, that it will strike the US mainland in the event of an attack on it.

India already has the means to put both Chinese and Pakistani targets at risk. However, if the West continues appeasing India, the latter will, tomorrow, also be able to put Western critical assets at risk. India is the only country in the Seven-Nation Club that has no security rationale for developing an ICBM. It does not harbour adversarial relations with any state which lies thousands of miles away. China is the only country that can be classified as a potential enemy to India. However, China is a bordering state to India, and in the event of a war, India or China would not need ICBMs to attack one another, as Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) would be able to perform strikes quite effectively.

So this begs the question: Why is India really building ICBMs? To decode this, we need to examine an old but still relevant concept postulated by Scott D. Sagan in his paper titled, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons”. Although nuclear weapons and ICBMs are

different concepts, there are certain overlaps that interlink both, first and foremost, their symbolic value, and also the fact that ICBMs are, in the majority of cases, tipped with nuclear warheads only.

Among his theories, Sagan mentions the element of prestige, specifically noting the French nuclear acquisition. As early as 1951, the first French Five-Year Plan was put forward with the clear intention to make France an important country by the end of the decade. As the colonial legacy faded, there had to be other sources through which France’s lost prominence was to be reinstated – nuclear weapons, thus filled that crucial gap. “For de Gaulle, the atomic bomb was a dramatic symbol of French independence and was thus needed for France to continue to be seen, by itself and others, as a great power.” It won’t be naïve to assess that India’s pursuit of ICBMs falls in line with the same rationale with which France sought its nuclear weapons. On the one hand, Indian officials believe that their ICBM development program would serve as a credible countermeasure to the Chinese threat. But this viewpoint is problematic. A report by the Delhi Policy Group states that “... the back-to-back

intermediate and intercontinental missile tests by India signals a push for nuclear parity with China,” even though in the same report the authors believe that China does not see India as an existential threat and does not see a war with India as a possibility in the short-to-medium run, partly due to India’s strategic culture and no-war policy. Also, China is highly confident in its conventional as well as nuclear superiority over India – in fact, many believe China has already surpassed its main rival, the US, in airpower and hypersonic weapon systems, to mention a few. The country will allegedly field more than a thousand nuclear warheads by 2035, according to some Western reports. Therefore, at the current pace of global arms development, the chances of India gaining any meaningful parity vis-à-vis China are slim even in the long run.

Another concern is the development of the Agni-VI, which is purported to have a range of 10,000km; effectively placing the entire globe within its engagement envelope. With this development, any Indian claim of security-centrism, especially vis-à-vis China, is undermined. Absent major conflicts with

others, India’s nuclear weapons modernisation in the ballistic missile realm would logically only serve its pursuit of prestige and renown by entering a select group of countries possessing ICBMs. In the future, India may use its nuclear-tipped ICBMs to leverage more and more appeasement by its Western allies. The ICBM program, when fully developed, will allow India to pursue a more assertive foreign policy in the coming years and decades. Alliances and friendships are not permanent in international affairs. Those who view India as an ally today may find themselves troubled by the increasing Indian assertiveness and even belligerence – this is a logical certainty whether stakeholders choose to believe it or otherwise. As India’s domestic political discourse is rife with the pursuit of Great Power Status for India, and great powers seldom yield to others without attempting to assert their own dominance. This escalatory behaviour will be risky. With readily deployable ICBMs, India will surely pursue a more hardline foreign policy marked by greater willingness to take risks and even escalate.

There is a lesson for the Western policy circles in this. India already has the means to put both Chinese and Pakistani targets at risk. However, if the West

continues appeasing India, the latter will, tomorrow, also be able to put Western critical assets at risk.

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India's Unfounded Two-Front War Dilemma

Shah Meer

During the India-Pakistan 4-day conflict, China urged both sides to de-escalate and called for a “political settlement through peaceful means,” showing neutrality and responsibility. Contrary to the prevailing apprehension in the West and India that China may open a second front against India in an escalatory situation, perceived as a ‘two-front war’ Dilemma, has remained rhetorical. China urged both India and Pakistan to de-escalate and seek political settlement through peaceful means. China has refrained from engaging in a direct military confrontation with India during the India-Pakistan crisis. China has consistently advocated for the resolution of disputes between India and Pakistan through peaceful means and has avoided taking actions that further escalate tensions. China has extended its diplomatic support to Pakistan only on issues that are legitimate under the United Nations (UN) charter and International Law. Following the Pahalgam episode, Beijing did not extend diplomatic support to Pakistan, contrary to the common belief in India,

but instead urged both countries to exercise restraint and urged for a ‘quick and fair investigation’. This reflects the standard approach that any responsible country may adopt at a time of escalation.

China’s stance aligns with international law, which prohibits any state from violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another nation-state. Beijing also exercised caution on the matter of terrorism. In a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) statement, which was also supported by China, the UNSC advocated for holding the perpetrators, organizers, and financiers of terrorism accountable. The Indian rhetoric of alleged Chinese echoing Pakistan’s diplomatic stance suffers from empirical shortcomings and analytical biases. It is an agenda-setting for extended Western support and a pretext for a military modernization program that may add to the great power ambitions of India. China’s arms exports to Pakistan are legal and comply with international norms, contrary to Indian claims.

China-based arms, defense systems, and fighter jets also remained controversial in the eyes of Indian experts and a burning topic for Indians and their Western counterparts. China's arms export to Pakistan was perceived as a 'growing strategic nexus' between China and Pakistan with potential implications for the deterrence dynamics of India. Some Indian commentators went ahead and added that the two-front war was shifted to 'one-front reinforced war' in the wake of growing China-Pakistan strategic synergy.

Arguably, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China is the world's fourth-largest arms exporter, and accounts for 5.9% of global arms transfers. The major recipients of Chinese arms exports are Bangladesh, Myanmar, Algeria, Pakistan, and other African and Middle Eastern countries. Neither Pakistan leverages any special concession or waiver in its arms purchase, nor does China solely sell weapons to Pakistan. It is important to note that China's conventional arms exports to Pakistan are not illegal and forbidden by international arms control regimes or non-proliferation frameworks. China's

defense cooperation with Pakistan aims to fulfill Pakistan's security needs in a volatile security environment. If China had provided arms to Pakistan in violation of international norms, it would likely have been perceived as a deliberate act of strategic favoritism towards Pakistan.

Contrastingly, the United States provided India a Nuclear Supplier Group Waiver in 2008 despite India not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The waiver allows India to import uranium, nuclear reactors, and technology that can be used for military purposes. Moreover, several military and non-military pacts between the US and India, such as the General Security of Military Information Act, the Logistical Exchange Memorandum of Agreement, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and others, to counter China are significantly increasing. The 'two-front war' narrative is largely rhetorical and used to justify India's military buildup.

These agreements are affecting the strategic stability in South Asia and allowing the increasing role of extra-

regional actors in the region. In comparison to the American support to India in the strategic realm, Pakistan gets only symbolic support from China within the confines of the global frameworks. There are no flagship military agreements, information sharing, logistical support, or intelligence sharing. Pakistan's international stance is not led by apprehension or any quest for concession from China. Furthermore, China's Beidou Satellites, Chinese intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) assets, cyber warfare efforts, and other tactical assets are falsely quoted to be utilized by Pakistan without any credible international reports or evidence. The

Chinese fishing fleet is also baselessly accused of monitoring India's naval deployments. Beijing is also accused of developing the sea leg of Pakistan's nuclear triad. U.S.-India strategic pacts contrast with China's symbolic support to Pakistan within global frameworks.

This entire narrative-shaping framework is orchestrated to demonstrate China bolstering Pakistan's conventional and strategic capabilities to complicate India's strategic calculus in an operational scenario involving India, to secure more military and diplomatic support from the West that can, in any sense, advance India's aspirations for great power status.

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Miscalculations, Excuses, Denial!

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Two months after the Operation Sindoor, India is still struggling to come to terms with the setbacks it has endured. From miscalculating the fallout of their aggression to excuses after that, they are now in a denial mode. Denying their heavy military losses, third-party mediation for a ceasefire, and now, of course, the historic snub at the diplomatic front.

All that the world has witnessed, reported and confirmed. India is still denying heavy military losses from Operation Sindoor despite clear evidence. Turning a blind eye to its failure is not new for India, they hailed their fallen pilot Abhinandan as a hero in 2019 as well, and cooked stories of his heroism that never existed. But this time, they have gone a notch up, Mr. Ajit Doval says, India never endured any losses in the recent standoff. Well then, he should probably count his Rafales and take a humble pie because this strategic culture of ignorance that India has most recently adopted would take it nowhere.

When we delve into this whole episode of Sindoor, we see a method to this

madness. It all started with an attack in Pahalgam, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) – an occupied state which has been resisting Indian repression for decades now. For India, the solution has always been tunneled vision, and that is to blame Pakistan for anything or everything in IIOJK. It came up with the same strategy after the recent attack, and instead of indulging in some introspection, it directly blamed Pakistan without any proper evidence. The Indian response was not surprising for Pakistanis, but it was nauseating to say the least. Their media went gaga with its dramatic Bollywood undertone, inciting its government to attack Pakistan, as if they were waiting to catch on this moment. But for what? No one dared question that in the hyper nationalistic environment. Indian government responded to the war hysteria and attacked Pakistan in the dead of night on May 7, 2025. A move that was miscalculated beyond measures.

India was definitely not ready for what was coming after that, they miscalculated the fallout of their actions and didn't expect Pakistan to retaliate in the manner it did. Hence, we saw heavy military losses that India is still failing to come to terms with. This not just reflects poorly on Indian political leadership but also on their military leadership, which time and again has failed to convince their ideologically volatile politicians not to go to war with Pakistan.

Indian Parliamentary Delegation, lobbying against Pakistan, is coming up with some very astonishing excuses after the Operation. For instance, in one of the interviews, Mr. Shashi Tharoor says, India blames Pakistan for this incident because of its past. How apt and responsible, one would wonder. This shows the seriousness of the ruling elite of India, which is not just becoming irresponsible but rogue and belligerent with each passing day. Another member of the delegation Mr. Milind Deora, when questioned about who they have convinced about Pakistan's role in Pahalgam? Embarrassingly started deflecting, which underscores the weakness of their point. Indian political and military leadership miscalculated the

retaliation, exposing flawed strategic assumptions.

Surprisingly enough, India still refuses to learn a lesson after the Sindoor. Their Think Tanks are trying to find silver linings in what was madness beyond proportion. Dr. Sidharth Raimedhi, Fellow at CSDR, in one of his pieces, emphasizes the need for a doctrinal shift in India, from deterrence to compellence, with more preventive strikes. Thinking that India would control the strategic environment in South Asia at will by such strikes, and Pakistan would not be able to do anything.

No matter how wishful the thinking be, such delusions from a think tank are staggering. Downplaying Nuclear Deterrence so casually is not just delusional but rash at the same time. Nuclear Deterrence is a reality backed by decades of doctrinal evolution. It was this very nuclear deterrence that made India surrender on May 10 and earned its leadership the name of "Surrender Modi".

There is also a need to understand that competence is harder to navigate and control, and with India's recent failures, it seems very unlikely that they will be able to tread that path. Knowing Indian

history, another misfired Brahmos at an unintended target, and things would spiral out of control. Besides, Pakistan is almost at par with India militarily, if not ahead. And the recent Indian losses after all the chest thumping just confirm that. India is no Russia or the USA, and Pakistan is no Ukraine or Iran. That reality needs to sink in in India, and the earlier the better.

Such a doctrinal shift also requires credibility, which India lacks today, and that has been evident in the world's response to its recent actions. India is probably at its all-time low on the diplomatic front.

Despite active lobbying, the diaspora's pressure and media might India has failed to convince the world to buy its narrative on Pahalgam. Indian failure was echoed by the joint statement of QUAD, a strategic alliance involving India. In a statement issued on July 1, they refrained from blaming Pakistan, which irked India more.

Their media began questioning India's role in the very alliance. Here, this actually should prompt the other three QUAD members to reflect and think, is India really a stabilizing partner in the alliance or a liability? Global response, including QUAD's silence on Pakistan's role, reflects India's diplomatic low.

India is frustrated now, they were blinded in their hyper nationalism and never expected Pakistan, a seven times smaller nation, to humble them in a way it did. In this frustration, India can repeat another Sindoor, which can escalate things beyond control. Here, the world needs to step up and ask some serious questions. For how long have some non-state actors driven the actions of nuclear India? Is an emotionally frustrated India, always reactive to the actions of non-state actors, safe for the region and world overall? Certainly not, and therefore, some serious steps should be taken to put a leash on this nuclear power, or denuclearize it, for a larger global interest.

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Nuclear Deterrence and the Return of Realpolitik

Asadullah Raisani

There are three major events that have significantly altered the course of history in the recent past. First, the two World Wars in the last century caused millions of casualties, gross violations of international norms, and a global economic depression, ultimately leading to the establishment of the nuclear proliferation regime. Second, the tragic incident of 9/11, in which four hijacked planes resulted in the deaths of nearly three thousand American citizens. Third, the two limited aerial wars that occurred in the last two months, May and June.

By now, it is clear that we no longer live in the world as it was before May 7. The Indian false-flag operation against Pakistan, which began on that day, tested the nation's diluting deterrence. However, Pakistan not only effectively restored and upheld its credible minimum deterrence policy during the aerial conflict from May 7 to 10, but it is also continuing to perform well in various domains, with diplomacy being foremost among them. That mad venture by the BJP-led Indian government has injected a new spirit into the Pakistani nation,

which can be effectively harnessed to help lift the country toward progress. Something similar was witnessed during the recent 12-Day War between Iran and Israel, which took place from June 12 to June 23. The so-called "Operation Rising Lion" was initially aimed at rolling back Iran's nuclear program by bringing about regime change in the country. Images of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife alongside Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife—the son and daughter-in-law of the last ruler of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran—surfaced during the 12-Day War. The meeting took place two years ago in April 2023 in Jerusalem. Reza Pahlavi was received at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport by Israel's Intelligence Minister, Gila Gamliel. Many analysts believe that regime change is the only way Iran's nuclear programme can be rolled back once and for all. However, no one can say with certainty whether Reza Pahlavi would meet the same fate as Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, who faced a tragic end after dismantling his country's nuclear programme.

There are a few urgent lessons to be drawn from these two recent military episodes for the nations that are militarily weaker than a few major powers or their allies.

First, in the realm of power politics, weaker states tend to rely on international law, norms, and morals, whereas stronger states often pursue their goals by any means necessary. In both recent cases, beginning with the Pakistan-India 2025 crisis, it was Pakistan's strong and credible deterrent defence that prevented the country from plunging into a full-scale war and the region from descending into a nuclear standoff. Had Pakistan not been conventionally capable or a nuclear-armed state, India—with its larger armed forces—might have struck Pakistan as brutally as Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories.

In the second case, it was again Iran's drone and missile capabilities that prevented it from becoming another Iraq or Afghanistan. Even if there had been some internal debate among the Iranian leadership—under the fatwa of their Islamic Revolution leader, Ayatollah Khomeini—regarding uranium

enrichment for military purposes, that ambiguity has likely been clarified by Israel's unprovoked war against Iran. The USA joined the aerial assault simply because Israel is a key ally, and its current Prime Minister has built his entire political career on the claim that Iran is just weeks away from developing nuclear weapons—a claim he has been making since the mid-1990s and more loudly since 2009.

Second, the pledge of “Never Again” and the leadership that upheld it are long gone. Today, comparatively weaker states are vulnerable to nuclear-armed powers simply because they either lack nuclear weapons themselves or do not enjoy the protection of a nuclear umbrella. Even the very concept of a nuclear umbrella is fading. It has become increasingly evident that in conflicts involving a nuclear-armed state and a non-nuclear state—such as in the case of nuclear-armed Israel versus non-nuclear Iran—a major power like the USA is more likely to intervene in favor of the nuclear state. In contrast, when both states are nuclear-armed, as in the case of India and Pakistan, the same powerful state tends to avoid direct involvement.

This pattern is further illustrated by the war between Ukraine and Russia. The USA has refrained from directly intervening, as Washington is unwilling to risk a direct confrontation with Moscow for the sake of Kyiv. Had Ukraine possessed nuclear weapons, the Russian invasion might never have occurred— or, at the very least, would likely have remained limited, as has generally been the case between the South Asian rivals. Therefore, it must be understood that the world we live in today compels nations to rely primarily on themselves. The United Nations and its various bodies have become increasingly irrelevant during and after these wars.

Third, Noam Chomsky is right when he says that future generations will remember us as irrational people who were busy spending billions of dollars on arms while poverty was rampant in many parts of the world. These two recent events must have compelled many nations—especially those without strong

defense capabilities and traditionally focused on innovation, like Japan—to rethink their strategic approaches.

In today's volatile world, only those who can guarantee their own survival are secure. In such anarchy, who cares about technological advancement, who cares about education and science, and who cares about building a better, liberal, stable, and tariff-free economy across the globe? Welcome to the pre-World War I era, where fear and mistrust dominate international relations, where everyone is afraid of everyone, and where any coming year could be the next 1914.

Though the number of lessons may be many, only a few key ones have been discussed here. The learned and responsible must continue their efforts to prevent the spread of hatred. States should not rely solely on the so-called guardians of the so-called New World Order, and the international community as a whole must wake up from its slumber before it is too late.

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Unmasking India's Crisis Narrative

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Whenever tensions flare between India and Pakistan, multiple narratives emerge, some grounded in truth, others heavily distorted. In a recent policy report titled "Operation Sindoor and India's New Doctrine of Deterrence," Indian Lt. Gen. Paramjit Singh (retd) claimed in the chapter "Role of DGMOs Hotline in India-Pakistan Crises" that a single phone call between military officers of both nations on 10 May 2025, prevented a potentially dangerous confrontation from escalating into a full-scale war. While this might sound impressive at first, it is important to consider that such descriptions often reveal only one side of the story. In reality, what happened behind the scenes was much more complicated. To grasp the full truth, we need to look beyond the headlines and question the dominant and often misleading versions being presented as facts.

A so-called "single phone call" between the DGMOs, which is now being praised as a game-changing moment, raises a serious question: Was it really just a military-to-military exchange that brought peace, or is this a potentially incomplete

account of a much bigger political embarrassment? The truth is, India had encountered expeditious and determined resistance from Pakistan following Operation Sindoor. As India's advanced Rafale jets suffered significant setbacks, Prime Minister (PM) Modi found himself in a challenging position and reportedly sought assistance. It was not the DGMO reaching out for peace; some accounts suggest that it was India that reached out to the United States (US), seeking urgent assistance to help de-escalate a rapidly worsening situation that was slipping beyond India's control. However, instead of admitting this, the story is being flipped to suggest that Pakistan initiated contact through the DGMO hotline to request a ceasefire. This is not just misleading; it appears as an attempt to hide the fact that India's aggressive strategy had backfired, and it needed a foreign hand to pull it back from the edge. Throughout the policy report, Singh conveniently ignored the fact that not only did Pakistan strongly condemn the Pahalgam incident, but also called for an investigation by an

impartial international commission; a move that effectively challenges India's credibility and highlights its unwillingness to subject its claims to independent scrutiny.

Singh praises Operation Sindoor as a strategic success, proudly claiming it struck terrorist sites deep inside Pakistani territory. But let's be clear: this was not a clean, precise military operation; it was a brutal display of power intoxication that hit civilian areas and sacred sites. Among the targets were mosques, homes, and community infrastructure in Pakistan's Punjab province, far from the Line of Control (LoC) and with no clear link to any militant activity. These attacks killed civilians, disrespected religious sanctities, and tore into the moral fabric of conflict laws. By celebrating such operations, Singh is not providing a military analysis; he is attempting to justify indiscriminate violence while dangerously rewriting the rules of engagement. If this is the new doctrine India wants to adopt, then it is not deterrence, it is a provocation dressed as pride, and this is equivalent to

putting the lives of millions of innocent people at risk.

Singh's accusation that Pakistan treats terrorism as a legitimate policy tool is an old and worn-out narrative that New Delhi keeps regurgitating to cover its own tracks. It is the same predictable script used to deflect attention whenever India finds itself cornered. Pakistan, a country that has sacrificed nearly a million lives over decades in the fight against terrorism, has itself been a major victim. And time and again, the roots of such terrorism have been traced back to India, with Kulbhushan Jadhav standing as a living, undeniable proof of this reality.

Singh's declared intention to "respond more forcefully" to future terrorist attacks than India did during Operation Sindoor is equally alarming. Such statements raise serious concerns that India may once again resort to a false flag operation, much like the unverified Pahalgam attack. Even the Indian government could not provide conclusive evidence regarding the assailants. This failure to identify the culprits reflects the apparent incompetence of Indian institutions and exposes a serious gap in their internal security. Despite all its

intelligence claims, India still cannot track attackers within its own borders. One has to ask: What explains this apparent gap in their intelligence capabilities?

In the same breath, Singh also claimed that India exercised “initial restraint” during confrontation with Pakistan. Yet the deployment of its Rafale jets violating Pakistan’s airspace presents a stark contrast to this claim. Such actions hardly align with the idea of restraint and underscore an aggressive posture India frequently attempts to mask with diplomatic language. Throughout the policy report, Singh conveniently ignored the fact that not only did Pakistan strongly condemn the Pahalgam incident, but also called for an

investigation by an impartial international commission; a move that effectively challenges India’s credibility and highlights its unwillingness to subject its claims to independent scrutiny.

The truth is, ever since India faced embarrassment during Operation Sindoor, its leadership and media have been aggressively disseminating distorted information about Pakistan in a desperate attempt to rewrite history and distract from their own failures. While such attempts to control the narrative may intensify, genuine reconciliation and regional stability can only begin when difficult truths are acknowledged, not evaded.

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Kashmir After Abrogation of Article 370

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The narrative that terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK) is nearing an end after the abrogation of Article 370, as claimed in Shiv Sahai's article, "What Awaits J&K in Terms of Terrorism and How to Prepare for It?" published in *Operation Sindoor & India's New Doctrine of Deterrence (Strategic Lessons from the 2025 India-Pakistan Crisis)*, needs a critical examination. However, the claim presents a misleadingly linear and state-centric interpretation of a multifaceted conflict. While reduced militant activity and infrastructure expansion are often showcased as signs of stability, these metrics fail to capture the emotional, political, and civic alienation that persists in the region. This rebuttal contests the false narrative that actions such as the abrogation of Article 370, increased militarization, and economic projects have resolved the Kashmir issue. Instead, it recenters attention on the silenced voices, democratic backsliding, and unresolved grievances that continue to shape the current reality.

The perception of peace in the IIOK after the 2019's abrogation of article 370, is largely manufactured through repression rather than reconciliation. Under the unlawful Public Safety Act (PSA), thousands of individuals, including minors, political leaders, and civil society members have been detained. . In addition, a 213-day internet blackout and 550 days of partial/full shutdown was also implemented in Kashmir, making it the longest internet restriction, paralyzing education, media, healthcare, and commerce.

Furthermore, the visibly reduced public protests are less a reflection of changed sentiment but because the cost of speaking out has become too high. In 2019, India moved almost 50,000 military and paramilitary personnel to the occupied region, an addition to the 700,000 already stationed there. Since then, the militarization in Kashmir has increased in a gradual manner and continues to be the most densely militarized zone on earth. To equate the absence of visible unrest with the

presence of peace is a dangerous misreading of the ground reality. True peace involves justice, dignity, guarantee of fundamental rights and participation, not the suppression of voices through surveillance and fear.

India is attributing Kashmir's unrest solely to external interference and affiliating it unfoundedly with the Pakistan and ignoring its critical domestic factors. They are avoiding the root cause of the insurgency which stems from the illegal occupation of valley using force and the 1987 state elections which were widely perceived those elections as rigged, delegitimized democratic processes and that betrayal radicalized a generation, including Yusuf Shah (later Syed Salahuddin), and catalyzed the armed insurgency. Furthermore, the repeated dismissal of elected leaders like Sheikh Abdullah (1953) and Farooq Abdullah (1984), and the imposition of Governor's Rule, systematically dismantled Kashmir's faith in Indian democracy. These duplicities intensified a growing belief that Kashmiri agency was expendable. Reducing the conflict to a foreign-sponsored phenomenon ignores these historical wounds and

delegitimizes the region's indigenous political aspirations.

The claim that the abrogation of Article 370 resolved Kashmir's political dispute is not only misleading but is constitutionally and ethically flawed. Article 370 was not a special privilege but a contractual provision of accession that recognized Indian Occupied Kashmir's unique political identity. Its unilateral revocation, at a time when the state legislature stood dissolved, constituted a grave violation of federal principles and democratic norms. Even staunch pro-India parties like the National Conference and the PDP condemned the move, and their leaders were jailed under preventive detention laws. After the 2019's abrogation of Article 370 the Gupkar Alliance was formed, calling for restoration of autonomy, and emphasized that the political dispute is far from over. Public trust was eroded evidently in the constrained political activity, low electoral participation, and continued suppression of civil liberties. What is projected as integration is perceived on the ground as disenfranchisement, political centralization masquerading as national unity.

Claims of rising pro-India sentiment in Kashmir lack credible substantiation. Since 2019, no independent opinion polls, referenda, or open political dialogues have been permitted to assess public opinion. Voter turnout in the Kashmir Valley has remained dismal, with the 2019 BDC elections recording participation as low as 5% in several districts. While DDC elections in 2020 saw marginally better turnout, this was attributed to localized development concerns, not ideological shifts. With journalists detained under UAPA and press freedoms stifled (RSF, CPJ), Kashmir has become an information vacuum. In a heavily shrieved and censored environment, declarations of public support are not just unreliable but are manipulative and, in such conditions, any narrative of loyalty or harmony is less a reflection of reality and more a projection of state ambition. While talking about economic initiatives, such as improved infrastructure and tourism, are often highlighted as signs of progress but they cannot replace meaningful political dialogue. Development without democracy is cosmetic. The Human Rights Watch Report-2022 pointed out the arbitrary detentions and suppression

of peaceful assembly during the development drives. It was also confirmed that the projects are implemented without community consultation, reducing them to tools of control rather than empowerment. True development in conflict zones must be participatory, inclusive, and rights-based, none of which currently characterize the approach in IIOK.

Declaring the Kashmir conflict resolved through military dominance and economic optics ignores the deeper currents of political disillusionment and historical betrayal. Peace is not the mere absence of violence, it is the presence of justice, dignity, and democratic agency. If India wishes to secure lasting peace in the Indian Occupied Kashmir, it must move beyond blame-game of terrorism, repression and rhetoric resolve all the outstanding issues with Pakistan including the core issue of Kashmir. Restoring political autonomy, withdrawing its forces from the valley, enabling civil liberties, engaging in genuine dialogue, and acknowledging the region's unique identity are not concessions, they are prerequisites for healing. Until these foundational issues are addressed, any reduction in violence

remains fragile, and any claim of resolution remains premature.

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