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BALUCHISTAN THINK TANK NETWORK, QUETTA

Mapping Pathways for Sustainable Policy Solutions

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 August 2025 edition of the Monthly Collage comes at a time when South Asia's security environment is becoming increasingly hard. The collection of analyses presented here makes one point clear: the region is drifting toward instability as old disputes, unchecked militarization, and the encroachment of new technologies converge in ways that heighten the risk of conflict. This edition does not only diagnose challenges; it also underscores the need for restraint, vigilance, and credibility in navigating this turbulent landscape.

The continuing growth of Indian nuclear and missile potential has become one of the burning issues. The recurrence of theft, smuggling, and poor handling of the radioactive material not only points to disastrous failures in the domestic systems but also jeopardizes the whole global community.

It is possible that these lapses enable the acquisition of dangerous materials by non-state actors without independent control of the situation and the lack of effective control mechanisms. The fact that there is limited global outrage or responsibility over such developments is by itself a bad omen.

A silence to these violations normalizes international non-proliferation regimes by undermining their foundations.

Simultaneously, the Indian missile program has also taken a global rather than a regional orientation. With long-range systems, multiple warheads, submarine launches, and anti-satellite technology, its ambitions have expanded beyond deterring immediate neighbors. These transformations have prestige value back home but cause destabilizing effects on the region. Such development puts an already tenuous balance of power in South Asia under even more pressure and increases the chances of miscalculation during a crisis. The global scope of weaponry, instead of low-level plausible deterrence, is an indicator of a disturbing trend that the global community has readily ignored.

This issue highlights the significant hypocrisy between India's statements and actions. It presents itself globally as a proponent of peace and disarmament; however, its acts consistently reveal a profound hypocrisy. It has proposed test prohibitions and nuclear detonations, advocated for caution, dismissed binding agreements, and discussed the rule of law while violating or manipulating it when it suited its interests. The defense of cross-border military action exemplifies this notion through the discourse of legal self-defense. While these procedures seem justifiable and lawful, the accompanying evidence frequently lacks persuasiveness, leading to considerable detriment to civilians. On the contrary, they undermine the integrity of sovereignty and establish detrimental precedents. When allegations justify aggression, international law serves as a tool for the powerful rather than a safeguard for the vulnerable.

Conversely, Pakistan's strategic position has consistently been defined by restraint. It possesses a nuclear policy founded on credible minimum deterrence, intended to preserve stability rather than seek prestige. Since its inception, Pakistan has had to balance necessity and duty in the face of existential dangers. The reactions, even with heightened stress, have been assessed—employing diplomacy at international conferences, advocating for transparent investigations, and using prudence while maintaining its own defense. This deterrence and accountability enhance Pakistan's reputation both regionally and internationally.

Beyond the nuclear and missile concerns, unilateralism has begun to jeopardize existing cooperative frameworks. India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty earlier this year severely impacted Pakistan's agricultural and economic security.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling in Pakistan's favor reaffirmed the importance of not ignoring treaties. However, enforcement is unparalleled. When authoritative states can disregard the law without consequence, the rule of law is compromised and deemed ineffective.

The narratives surrounding the latest crises demonstrate the instrumentalization of propaganda. Exaggerated battlefield accounts, falsified reports of events, and inaccurate representations of international neutrality have been employed to manipulate public perception and shape discourse within the global community.

Refuting such narratives through empirical research is both an intellectual duty and a strategic need. Clarity and veracity are vital elements of national security in an era where policy is shaped more by perception than by actual capacity.

The articles in this edition provide a warning and a way forward, taken together. The caution is that security architecture in South Asia is becoming worse day by day as it is stretched by militarization, hypocrisy, and global apathy. The way ahead is in the firm resolve of Pakistan to remain vigilant, resolute, and responsible.

The nation has to maintain an effective deterrence and avoid prestige arms competitions. It needs to fight propaganda with the truth and make its voice heard in foreign arenas. It should champion inclusive and fair arms control structures that regain the credibility of world governance. It has to base its policies on the law, whether to protect water rights or sovereignty, because legitimacy is a source of power. It must be prepared to confront the new threat of AI and cyber warfare and ensure that people, not algorithms, make life-and-death decisions.

This edition ultimately reminds us that the balance of power in South Asia is not merely about arsenals but about credibility. Pakistan's measured resolve, defensive doctrine, and commitment to stability provide it with an enduring advantage.

But this advantage must be protected and projected with clarity. The stakes are immense, not only for Pakistan but for the wider region and the integrity of the global order. In a time when perception can be as decisive as capability, the task before us is to ensure that restraint is not mistaken for weakness, and that responsibility is recognized as the true foundation of strength.

Editor

Dr. Siraj Bashir Baloch

Indian Nuclear Black Market: A Global Security Threat

Harsa Kakar

Nuclear theft in India is not a new occurrence. The country has been facing this alarming situation for so many decades now. This has become a serious threat to the security of India and even South Asia, not to mention the entire globe.

The black market smuggling of uranium brokering, smuggling of highly radioactive substances like Californium, are all vintage examples, and the problem is ever-increasing in India. Insufficiencies in the protection of fissile materials will undermine the international non-proliferation regime and will increase the chances of nuclear terrorism, which will be catastrophic in terms of the security of the whole region and the global one.

Then in August 2024, Indian police in Gopalganj district of the state of Bihar seized 50 grams of Californium, an extremely radioactive element, valued on the black market by some estimates at 100 million. It was not the only incident. There have also been reports of theft of more than 200 kilograms of nuclear and radioactive material, which dates as far back as the 1990s. Indian police seized over 13

kilograms of uranium in two separate operations in May and June 2021 in the states of Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

In July 2024, a radioactive device at the Bhabha Atomic Research Center was stolen, and five people were arrested in the city of Dehradun. Such incidents indicate vices within the Indian nuclear security systems that include a lack of patrols, inside jobs, and weak regulation procedures. The same has been displayed in the histogram below.

India is the ninth major uranium producer globally and a large importer of uranium. The theft of the most radioactive element in the nuclear program puts the whole system in a threatening situation. Similarly, the Nuclear Security Index by the Nuclear Threat Initiative 2020 placed India at an index of 0.54 (rank 20 out of 22 countries) in securing nuclear materials, compared to Pakistan, which was noted to have improved the most in this sector. The fact that there is no independent nuclear regulation organization means that the problem is further enhanced since India has its Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) reporting

to the Department of Atomic Energy, thus compromising its independence and efficacy.

What is more alarming is the existence of non-state terrorist groups and their potential reach to this nuclear black market. It is to be noted that Natural uranium, which is commonly confiscated in these events, cannot be directly applied in the production of nuclear weapons unless it is greatly enriched, but can be used with conventional explosives to form a so-called dirty bomb.

This type of device would lead to mass panic, pollution of the environment, and loss of life on a huge scale. The risk is increased by the strategic competition between India and Pakistan and also by the dynamics of tensions in South Asia. The Foreign Office of Pakistan has been saying this several times since stolen materials may fall into the hands of non-state actors across the border, leading, perhaps, to a larger conflict. China has also raised its concerns over the regional repercussions of the Indian nuclear security breach.

This is worrying that the international community does not raise a lot of voices against such incidents. Additionally, India's receiving the waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2008 has

facilitated India's access to the world Uranium market and nuclear trade without adequate accountability, even though it is not a signatory to the NPT. There is no transparency since security breaches in India are often not reported in the Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB) by the IAEA.

Such silence is potentially dangerous and may even justify repeated lapses in India since it is liable to render the international non-proliferation campaign dysfunctional. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540 and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) offer strict control, but India is dubious about complying with such provisions. For instance, a huge cybersecurity risk was highlighted by the 2019 cyberattack on Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, where the national nuclear infrastructure was proven to be addressing security risks not only on the physical level.

To reduce such risks, India needs to revamp its nuclear security system. Setting up of an independent regulatory authority, in line with the IAEA declaration, and enhancing the system of material accounting are important measures. India should be held responsible by the international community, especially the NSG and the IAEA, by

restricting its use of nuclear trade unless better security measures are taken at least. Tensions and nuclear security could be alleviated through regional cooperation, including confidence-building measures such as the Strategic Restraint Regime that has been proposed by Pakistan.

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Harsa Kakar

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When Action Betrays Words

Nomeen Kassi

At the global stage, India projects itself to be a country that promotes democracy and peace – domestically and internationally. However, the reality is different from the projection. Although India has always been a supporter of disarmament, India was simultaneously engaged in the acquisition of nuclear arsenals and long-range missiles, endangering global peace. Similarly, Maya Tudor, in her piece “Why India’s Democracy Is Dying”, explains how India’s democracy is suffering domestically. There is a great contradiction in India’s words and actions. India’s nuclear ambition is a mix of restraint and militarization.

This betrayal of words shows how India had been playing a strategic game and ended up stretching its nuclear options. India’s nuclear ambition is a mix of restraint and militarization, following a well-planned projection of restraint on the surface and ambitious militarization under the surface. Its nuclear test is a tale of betrayal as India continued working on its nuclear acquisition. India’s doctrine of deterrence and weapon advancement casts doubt on the false perception it shows the globe. This

divergence between speech and act raises questions regarding India’s true intentions.

To illustrate, the nuclear program in India started in the late 1940s, with the help of the US and Canada under the label “Atom for Peace”. Nevertheless, India then diverted to different nuclear power plants and performed the first nuclear test in 1974 at Pokhran, named “Smiling Buddha”, damaging the International Non-Proliferation Treaty. Subsequently, India has stayed tactically ambiguous and opposed signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) due to its discriminatory nature of legalizing the nuclear monopoly of five countries while excluding others. This stance remains a crucial element of India’s disarmament diplomacy.

While carefully examining the dates, one can see a contradiction in India’s act and speech. India has been inconsistent with its nuclear policies since the start of its nuclear program. At the time they were developing a nuclear weapon, then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called for a treaty banning all nuclear test explosions in 1954. Following the proposal, India conducted its first nuclear test. After this test, in 1978,

India again proposed a ban on nuclear weapons testing. Additionally, in 1982, India proposed another program, including a convention on non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, a freeze on the manufacture of nuclear weapons. India officially declared itself a nuclear-weapon state, shattering its false image of supporting disarmament.

Early in 1996 while speaking to the Conference on Disarmament on 25 January, the Indian representative stressed that India was “committed to working towards a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that will promote the goal of total nuclear disarmament and thereby, the lasting and legitimate security interests of all countries in a nuclear weapon free world, including our own.” Nevertheless, India then refused to be a signatory to the CTBT. Speaking to the Indian Parliament, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asserted that “we have stated that the Government of India does not propose to manufacture nuclear weapons. We shall continue our efforts for nuclear disarmament”. Meanwhile, India was marching towards modernization, resulting in a series of nuclear experiments in 1998 at Pokhran-II.

With the tests, India officially declared itself to be a nuclear weapons state, shattering its false image of supporting nuclear disarmament. Although India is known to have endorsed the idea of nuclear disarmament, yet has turned every table for its acquisition. Similarly, India has not just stopped there. It is further expanding its military capabilities at a fast pace. These actions do not suit the state that endorses disarmament. To illustrate, India developed extensive missile technology.

Today, it has a wide range of missiles, including Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), the Prithvi series, and supersonic cruise missiles, such as the BrahMos. In July 2000, India introduced the Akash Surface to Air Missile (SAM) with a 30 km range. The disturbing aspect of this missile is its nuclear capability, which raises questions regarding the missile’s defensive nature. The Agni series of ballistic missiles, the nuclear-capable fleet of aircraft, and the deployment of nuclear-powered submarines such as the INS Arihant can be used as an example of such a direction.

Additionally, India is also developing multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), a hypersonic delivery system, and missile defensive shields. Also,

the Indian leadership has given some alarming utterances, indicating a review of the 'No First Use' policy. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, in 2019, said that "India has followed strictly the No First Use policy. Future is what future is and it's based on the situation." All these developments indicate that India is acting like a two-faced doll, being nice and dolly internationally while being engaged in weapon maximization. Nuclear exceptionalism granted to India by Western powers undermines non-proliferation norms.

Furthermore, the nuclear exceptionalism in India has been ignored by world powers and even aided them. In 2008, the US-India Civil Nuclear Deal legalized the nuclear program of India without its participation in the NPT, violating international non-proliferation standards. The fact that India is now increasingly taking on a strategic alliance with Western powers, especially as a counterbalance to China, has placed a shield around India regarding its nuclear record.

Even though India showcases a loud voice on disarmament, it has the opposite performance regarding weapon modernization and strategic ambiguity. India should match its ideals and its nuclear

posture towards the world. It should stop further growth and restore disarmament negotiations on nuclear weapons. Otherwise, it carries the risk that the rhetoric-reality gap would grow further and with serious consequences on regional as well as global stability.

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<https://stratheaia.com/when-action-betray-words/>

Nomeen Kassi

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How the world is ignoring a new nuclear trajectory in South Asia

Sher Ali, Musavir Barech

Amidst rising nuclear tensions, another missile race is unfolding in South Asia. In recent years, a substantial expansion of India's missile program, primarily focusing on long-range missiles, has taken place. India's missile expansion signifies a major shift in its military posturing, evolving from deterrence against China and Pakistan towards achieving global reach. These developments complicate security dynamics in South Asia, further undermine international nuclear frameworks, and could pose a threat to United States' interests.

India's missile development began in 1988 with the short-range Prithvi (150–350 kilometers), followed by the medium-range Agni in 1989 (1,200–2,400 kilometers, nuclear-capable). By 1997, India deployed 24 Prithvi missiles near the Pakistan border—remarkably, without facing US sanctions.

India's missile arsenal comprises ballistic, cruise, and anti-ballistic systems across all ranges. While its short- and medium-range missiles primarily target Pakistan, India can already reach all of China. India's

development of longer-range systems includes the Agni-V (5,000–7,500 kilometers) and the Agni-VI, which has a potential range up to 10,000 kilometers and is reported to carry multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRV) and is usable as a fractional orbital bombardment system. It also has sea-based options like the K-4 and K-5 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM).

These capabilities signal India's broader ambitions for global power projection and prestige. Its capabilities now include operational intercontinental ballistic missiles, multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and anti-satellite weapons, marking a shift from regional defense to strategic reach.

Since the formation of the Indo-US strategic partnership in the early 2000s, convergence of strategic interests between Washington and New Delhi has allowed India to benefit from the global nuclear framework, mainly, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile

Technology Control Regime. India, like Pakistan, is not a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and has developed its nuclear capabilities independently.

While Pakistan is not a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime, India has been since 2016. Through an exemption to non-nuclear-weapon states under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Missile Technology Control Regime membership is helping India to advance its missile program by providing access to advanced missile technology. Similarly, in 2008, through the Nuclear Suppliers Group waiver, India increased its nuclear production capacity.

The world powers, especially the US, continue to turn a blind eye toward these perilous developments in the region and beyond. Overlooking New Delhi's global reach with nuclear-capable missiles could be a strategic mistake by Washington. India may, at some point in the future, reassess its strategic alignment with the United States and determine that the partnership no longer aligns with its national interests, raising the possibility that India could emerge as a challenger to American interests, or worse, align with China.

In retrospect, the US and China supported the mujahideen resistance to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, though they did not coordinate their efforts. Later, China would emerge as a competitor to the US globally. Similarly, supporting India against the Chinese threat in the future could become a threat to the US.

The same blind eye on the development of India's missile programs might hit American interests in the region hard. To give credence to these facts, a plethora of credible think tanks, including Goldman Sachs, the world's second-largest investment bank, predict that India will have the world's second-largest economy by 2075. As a result, India will emerge as a direct economic threat to the US, which could translate into a future military challenge.

Checking India's missile program is not only in the interest of the US but, more importantly, good for global nuclear governance. It is currently marked by ineffectiveness due to the discord between nuclear "haves and have-nots."

American policy on South Asia continues to overlook key regional developments, focusing instead on Pakistan's missile

program despite broader nuclear trends. Former Biden administration officials like Vipin Narang, Pranay Vaddi, and Jon Finan raised alarms about Pakistan's pursuit of a long-range missile, labeling it an emerging threat—despite Pakistan's India-centric military posture and lack of global targeting ambitions.

It is important to investigate the historical and security dynamics in South Asia. Pakistan's missile program began in the late 1980s after India began to demonstrate its missile capabilities. Pakistan's missile program represents the country's India-centric and defense-oriented approach.

For instance, the short-to-medium-range systems (70–2,750 kilometers) are capable of targeting India from within Pakistani territory. The development of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle capability by Pakistan aims to penetrate India's advanced missile defenses, thereby strengthening deterrence. The Shaheen-III missile, with a range of 2,750 kilometers, meets Islamabad's requirement to have full coverage of India, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

In the same way, the development of tactical nuclear weapons was in response to India's Cold-Start Doctrine. This aims to deter

conventional incursions with battlefield nuclear use. Thus, acquiring an intercontinental ballistic missile capability is not in Pakistan's strategic interests.

The silence of the international community on this urgent matter is resulting in the erosion of global nuclear governance. Amidst rising tensions between nuclear states, the world is seeing recurring violations of established rules and international norms. The international community cannot move toward effective arms control arrangements that are aligned with evolving threats, disarmament, and strategic restraint under these conditions. Efforts for global peace and security can never be meaningful until threat perceptions and security challenges are addressed, including the resolution of long-standing disputes between archrivals.

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Challenges to Arms Control Regimes

Shah Meer

In their seminal work, *Strategy and Arms Control*, Thomas Schelling and Morton Helerine argued that meaningful arms control endeavors can translate into strategic stability – an idea that dominated the arms control frameworks for decades. However, arms control frameworks have become ineffective and not aligned with the novel and complex challenges of the twenty-first century. The multipolar structure is more destabilizing than the bipolar world, enforcing security dilemmas and strategic selectiveness.

In an evolving landscape of international and regional security, the global arms control frameworks confront several novel and complex challenges that have severe implications for strategic stability, crisis management, conflict resolution, and arms race stability. The foremost challenge confronting these frameworks arises from the evolving multipolar distribution of power. Marked by several competing blocs, as compared to a bipolar world, the multipolar structure is more destabilizing.

It involves a variety of players with varying interests, new convergences, alliances, and

strategic interests. It increases the structural competition on the international stage, enforces the security dilemma, provides space to the emerging and assertive nations, and fosters selectiveness in the arms control regimes. John Mearsheimer's scholarship on the matter posits that such a shift comes at the cost of diminishing global cooperation and a weakening commitment to international norms.

In the wake of power flux, ensuring compliance with arms control norms becomes increasingly insurmountable. Amidst an increased security dilemma, the parties to the frameworks lose their appetite for conformity, jeopardizing the entire arms control architecture.

Non-compliances particularly stem from the range of the missiles, irreversibility of a particular type of weapon, verification problems, concealment, and effective monitoring. In such situations, 'static subjectivity' and 'atomistic security concerns' prevail, whereby arms control and strategic stability mean different things for different states. It will result in the

traditional 'self-help' situation where states solely rely on their relative power.

Consequently, the crisis of legitimacy quagmires the initiatives, and states lose confidence in meaningful arms control dialogue. It creates a vacuum and intensifies the arms race. Historically, the arms control frameworks have also significantly lost legitimacy due to their inherent discriminatory nature, as they legitimize the acquisition of a particular set of weapons by a few countries and prohibit others. Static subjectivity and atomistic security concerns prevail, where arms control means different things to different states.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) does not dismantle the nuclear capabilities of the countries acquired before 1968, but curtails the acquisition of all others who intend to develop the capability later on. More recently, providing nuclear-armed submarines to Australia under the AUKUS and Nuclear Supplier Group's Waiver to India, despite not being a signatory to the NPT, are some empirical instances that undermine the credibility of the NPT and other regimes promoting arms control and non-proliferation.

Dynamism, versatility, and adaptation to the changing circumstances and molding the frameworks with the needs of time have remained a bone of contention. For instance, the developments in outer space, emerging technologies, and AI-enabled weapons remain covert, with no clear and legally binding international instruments. It is believed that weapons, especially such as hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs), although conventional, can compromise 'survivable second strike' capabilities of the states, a capability that is conditioned for the existence of deterrence.

Additionally, the frameworks are also not dynamic as they have not taken into account the rising asymmetries that are prolific following novel developments in the power flux. Unlike the Cold War period, parity-based agreements between the two blocs, the 21st century has unveiled more states with power ambitions and comparative asymmetries.

To achieve equilibrium with the adversaries has led to arms buildup and strategic chain reactions at the global level. As a result, many proponents have spurred behavioral arms control initiatives that are themselves subject to subjectivity. It posits that states must behave responsibly in the form of

signaling, diplomacy, and decision-making in high-stakes situations. Can the security imperatives and geopolitical necessities, and the fear of subjugation, allow states to behave so prudently on the logic whose premise is contingent on the intention of the adversary? Frameworks lose legitimacy due to discriminatory practices like the NPT's selective restrictions. The strategic stability in the international arena has turned fragile. The collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has intensified the tensions. There is indeed a need for the latest mechanism that can encompass and align with the new and emerging technologies.

PublicationLink:

<https://stratheia.com/challenges-to-arms-control-regimes/>

***Shah Meer (Research Assistant,
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India's Missing Friend: Why The world Didn't Back Operation Sindhoor

Sadaf Nadeem

History shows that since 1947, whenever the Indian government has faced internal chaos, administrative failures, or especially rising unrest in Kashmir, it has relied on a familiar tactic: deflect blame onto Pakistan and stir up nationalist sentiment.

Mr. Mohammad Kunhi's opinion piece, provocatively titled "India's Missing Friends During Op Sindoor" is just the latest example in this 75-year-old pattern. This article is not a genuine analysis.

But a deliberate piece of propaganda, based on a fictional premise to advance a specific political goal.

This response will dismantle this fictional foundation and reveal how Kunhi dangerously politicizes a military operation as misinterprets diplomacy as treachery, mislabels commerce as friendship, and simplifies the complexities of global politics into a childish 'friend-versus-foe' story.

To begin with, the entire edifice of this article is built on a foundation of sand. "Operation Sindoor," presented as a response to a so-called "Pakistan-sponsored" attack, is a fictional scenario.

This is not an accident; it is a sophisticated technique of "narrative framing," where one first fabricates an accusation and then, treating it as an established fact, builds an entire argument upon it. Even more dangerous, however, is the choice of the name "Sindoor" for this operation. The name is not innocent; it is a deliberate reflection of Hindutva ideology, which seeks to paint every issue, whether political or military, in a specific religious hue.

This attempt to co-opt a sacred cultural symbol for military aggression is a perilous strategy that puts the entire region's peace at stake.

Furthermore, Mr. Kunhi's commentary on global diplomacy exposes a remarkably immature and unserious worldview.

He is incensed with Western powers, particularly the United States, for urging "restraint" and "dialogue" between two nuclear-armed states instead of unconditionally backing India. For him, the appeal for peace and the effort to avert war is a betrayal of friendship. This is a glaring

double standard, especially coming from a country whose foreign minister, S. Jaishankar, frequently champions the philosophy of “strategic autonomy.” It seems India celebrates this autonomy for itself but views its exercise by other nations as an act of hostility. The reality is that the international community’s response was a responsible one, perfectly in line with the principles of the UN Charter, aimed at preventing a catastrophic war in the region.

Kunhi proceeds to label France, Russia, and Israel as “reliable friends,” primarily on the basis of their arms deals or supportive statements.

This is a naive portrayal of international relations. As data from global institutions like the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) clearly shows, India is one of the world’s largest importers of arms.

For major arms exporters like Russia and France, India is less a strategic friend and more a crucial “customer.”

Their statements and offers of military hardware are not proof of genuine friendship, but rather a commercial strategy to keep their largest market happy.

To frame this commerce as “true friendship,” Kunhi is either deceiving himself or deliberately deceiving his readers.

Finally, Kunhi’s dismissal of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and China as “friends of the enemy” reveals a simplistic “with us or against us” mentality. He fails to grasp that every nation has its own historical, cultural, and strategic relationships that are not governed solely by India’s perspective. Pakistan’s ties with Turkey and Azerbaijan are rooted in a shared heritage and the OIC, while its relationship with China is anchored in major economic initiatives like CPEC. To reduce these complex dynamics to mere “support for Pakistan” is tantamount to a failure to understand global politics.

In conclusion, Mohammad Kunhi’s opinion piece is not a fact-based analysis but a propaganda piece written with fervor fueled by Indian nationalist ambition.

It not only distorts reality but also promotes a dangerous ideology that favors war over diplomacy and an arms race over peace. The future of the region will not be secured by writing such fictions, but by finally abandoning the 75-year-old tradition of propaganda and committing to resolving the

Kashmir dispute according to international law and the UN resolutions.

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<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2025/08/12/indias-missing-friends-why-the-world-didnt-back-operation-sindoor/>

Sadaf Nadeem

(Research Assistant, Balochistan think Tank Network)

Missing Half of the Story!

Asadullah Raisani

The misleading yet old familiar rhetoric has just resurfaced in the recently released Indian policy report, “Operation Sindoor & India’s New Doctrine of Deterrence,” after India carried out a false flag operation, “Operation Sindoor,” in May this year.

The whole report is based on Indian narratives. It overstates military claims, stereotyping major geopolitical realities, and making efforts to underrepresent the strategic rationale of Pakistan.

One of the sections is highly misleading as it portrays India’s disappointment in European diplomacy, and the author is tactful not to present the necessary contextual details that are so important to a fair and impartial understanding of the May Conflict.

Pakistan condemned the Pahalgam attack but rejects equating Kashmiri resistance with terrorism.

First, one has to remember that Pakistan itself has been a victim of terrorism and condemns any terrorist act in all its forms and manifestations.

This is a reason that Pakistan quickly condemned the Pahalgam attack; however,

one line that it took, like before, is that the indigenous struggle of the Kashmiris is being equated to terrorism, which is of concern and highly problematic. The Resistance Front (TRF), the organization accused of the attack, is rather an inside anti-India revolt against the decades-long Indian military occupation of the Kashmir valley, rather than a cross-border one.

Many independent observers also believe it to be a front for local resistance organizations active within the valley. Unfortunately, the trend of hastily blaming Pakistan for such internal security lapses has become the new normal in New Delhi.

Second, the legitimization of Indian retaliatory attacks across the Line of Control (LoC), and even within the territory of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), fails to acknowledge a fundamental principle: any cross-border strike constitutes a violation of international law. As a sovereign state, Pakistan has every right to respond in self-defense. What deserves recognition is Pakistan’s measured response, which avoided reckless escalation.

The sole objective was to preserve credible minimum deterrence and prevent the region from being dragged into a nuclear conflict.

In contrast, Indian airstrikes have a poor record of limited tactical success paired with disproportionate propaganda value. For example, during the 2019 Balakot strikes, India claimed to have targeted a terrorist camp; however, independent media reports and satellite imagery later revealed that the Indian forces had struck an uninhabited hilltop.

Third, portraying European neutrality as a diplomatic failure clearly reflects double standards.

The European Union's (EU) call for restraint during the May conflict was not necessarily rooted in bias, but rather in recognition of the serious nuclear risks involved in the confrontation.

The very idea of seeing the EU's call for de-escalation as an insult to India is a frustration against the fact that such a call somehow puts India and Pakistan on equal footing. Besides, it cannot be ignored that both nations possess nuclear capability, and any misadventure or miscalculation can lead to a massive catastrophe in the region.

Any cross-border Indian strike violates international law and risks escalation.

Fourth, the Indian narrative relies heavily on unverified reports regarding the performance of the Pakistani and Indian air forces during the recent conflict. Indian claims of downing Pakistani jets remain unsubstantiated, while reports of Rafale aircraft being shot down have been verified by multiple media outlets and even acknowledged by senior Indian officials.

It should not be overlooked that such comparisons risk fueling an arms race in the region. The focus should instead be on crisis management, deterrence stability, and the prevention of escalation, not on who flew the faster jet or how many aircraft were lost. Moreover, it is no longer surprising that such acts of Indian aggression frequently coincide with upcoming elections in India, a pattern not observed in Pakistan for at least the past three electoral terms, if not more.

Fifth, the reason that is being highlighted periodically in the article in question is that Europe did not come forward to support India, completely overlooks the historical background. History reveals the fact that Western nations have in most cases been even too swift to support the Indian story against Pakistan. To illustrate, the human

rights violations and rampant miseries in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K) have never been admitted by the majority of Western countries, especially after the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, which quite openly disenfranchised the Muslim population of the occupied valley. In contrast, Islamabad has persistently advocated the Kashmir cause through diplomatic channels across multiple international platforms in its pursuit of justice for the oppressed.

Sixth, the claim that Pakistan is reliant on unconditional support from China and Türkiye, while India is constrained by “transactional” ties with the West, is indeed disingenuous. Islamabad’s partnerships are rooted in shared interests, regional stability, and strategic convergence, not merely in arms sales. Türkiye shares a principled stance with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, while China’s defense partnership with Pakistan is based on mutual regional deterrence, particularly in response to destabilizing actions in South Asia.

Finally, the report’s claim that India “emerged confident” militarily from the May conflict is highly misleading and unsupported by independent analyses. In reality, India’s ruling party faced domestic

criticism for underestimating Pakistan’s aerial preparedness, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi mockingly labeled “Surrender Modi” by major opposition parties. EU calls for restraint reflect nuclear risk awareness, not anti-India bias.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of the segment is its framing of the West’s caution as a form of betrayal.

This perspective dangerously disregards the need for restraint and responsibility in one of the most volatile regions in the world.

If nothing else, this experience ought to encourage Europe and other international players to take a more active stance in resolving the central problem, which is the unsettled status of Jammu and Kashmir. Otherwise, flare-ups will continue to pose a persistent danger to regional and international security in the absence of progress on this front.

Pakistan is still dedicated to the peaceful resolution of the disputes through diplomatic channels.

However, it cannot be expected to tolerate the violations of its sovereignty. A balanced strategic partnership with both South Asian

nations requires that Europe and the broader West engage with nuance, not nostalgia, and seek peace through parity, not patronage.

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From Independence to Deterrence: The Evolution of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Sher Ali Kakar

Since independence in 1947, Pakistan's foreign policy has been shaped by pressing security imperatives in a volatile regional environment. India's persistent hostility-rooted in historical Muslim-Hindu differences and the unresolved Kashmir dispute-quickly placed the new state under severe pressure. From the illegal occupation of Kashmir in 1947 to the wars of 1965 and 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh, India's actions have remained a constant challenge. At the same time, Pakistan had to resettle millions of refugees while India withheld its rightful share of assets, hoping the fledgling state would collapse.

This sense of insecurity against a larger, more powerful neighbour became the central driver of Pakistan's foreign policy, influencing ties with major powers and shaping its approach to regional states like Afghanistan and Iran. While initially aiming for an independent course, Pakistan joined the U.S.-led Western bloc by the mid-1950s, primarily to counter India's hegemonic ambitions. Entry into SEATO in 1954 was part of a broader effort to build military and economic strength.

India's 1974 nuclear test sharply escalated regional security concerns. For a country that had lost its eastern wing only three years earlier, facing a nuclear-armed adversary posed a grave strategic dilemma. Disillusioned by Washington's inability to meet its security needs, Pakistan recognised that reliance on alliances was insufficient. Given the conventional military imbalance, it turned to nuclear deterrence as the primary means of ensuring credible defence. Despite intense U.S. pressure and sanctions through the 1980s and 1990s, Pakistan's leadership persisted. In May 1998, following India's second round of nuclear detonations, Pakistan conducted its own tests-becoming the first Muslim-majority nation with nuclear capability and cementing deterrence as a cornerstone of its security policy.

The regional landscape remains tense, with India's military modernisation, nuclear build-up, and aggressive posture repeatedly triggering crises. The revocation of Kashmir's special status, coupled with extremist ideologies such as Akhand Bharat and Hindutva, has further undermined prospects for peace. India's growing defence

partnerships with the U.S., France, Russia, and Israel-alongside exemptions on nuclear matters-add complexity to South Asia's security equation.

While Pakistan has protected its interests through diplomacy and credible deterrence, new challenges demand a balanced approach. Avoiding bloc politics while maintaining constructive ties with both Washington and Beijing is essential. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project, anchors Beijing as a strategic partner in Pakistan's geo-economic ambitions. Re-engaging the U.S. on a mutually beneficial basis is equally important, given its role as Pakistan's largest export market, a source of investment, and a global power capable of influencing regional stability.

Finally, effective engagement with the Taliban government in Kabul remains critical for counterterrorism, border security, and trade expansion. Sustained diplomacy—regionally and globally—will be key to navigating an increasingly complex strategic environment while safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty and development goals.

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Post-Westphalian Paralysis: The Crisis of Modern Diplomacy

Naseem Sabzal

Much of what we know about the origin of early diplomacy is rooted in the experiences and practices of the ancient civilizations. “Amarna letters” reveal a glimpse of diplomatic relations between Egyptians and Mesopotamians in the late Bronze Age. Later, the “Megarian decree” was the first use of economic tools in foreign policy by any state, as sanctions levied by Athens against the city-state of Megara.

Even in the Middle Ages, empires maintained relations through envoys, treaties, and strategic marriages to formalise relations. Diplomacy played a pivotal role in the survival, stability, and conflict resolution between those civilizations. From ancient civilizations to the Middle Ages, the nature, standards, and characteristics of diplomacy remained consistent except for the operating principles and conduct of diplomacy, which evolved as society progressed.

The Peace of Westphalia established the principles of sovereign equality of states, which became the basis for bilateral diplomatic relations in Europe. Nation-states maintained power relations, although classical diplomacy was secret and state-centric in

essence, yet sovereign entities achieved a balance of power through interstate diplomacy, secret but successful for peace in Europe. Gentili and Vattel nourished this basic system with international law, state duties, and relations between sovereign states.

The fundamental objective was to maintain peace and balance of power, but each state pursued laws and norms according to its national interests. Different prevailing ideologies, democracy, and colonisation between the 18-19th centuries shattered the Westphalian order of peaceful co-existence, which resulted in two world wars, the Cold War, and bipolarisation.

The current trajectory of modern diplomacy has touched its lowest point in history, frequently failing, notably evident in the recent India-Pakistan and Iran-Israel crises. The diplomatic paralysis and the risk of escalation between nuclear-armed states raised critical concerns such as why modern diplomacy collapses in conflict resolution.

Despite its open nature and the assistance of international organisations to end hostilities and boost bilateral relations. The ironic decline of modern diplomacy is no different from the

classical one. State interests still overshadow rule-based systems, Realpolitik still succeeds normative structure in contrast with the Gentili, the Grotius, and the Vatteliano doctrines.

The conflict between India and Pakistan, involving the deployment of missiles and drones temporarily eroded deterrence. Both parties demonstrated maximum determination to escalate the situation for their sovereign integrity, and a nuclear catastrophe was perilously close. International peace is very fragile, just managed by mutual understanding and state-to-state engagement.

States with nuclear weapons bear more responsibility for sustaining the fragile peace. The US and the USSR survived a tense era of Cold War, important to recall the Cuban Missile Crisis nearly pushed both countries to the brink of nuclear confrontation. But the deadlock ended with President Kennedy's direct engagement with the Soviet Premier Khrushchev.

The diplomatic breakdown between the two nuclear rivals in South Asia has revived memories of the Cold War. Since 2019, India has challenged twice the sovereign integrity of Pakistan. Disregarding nuclear deterrence and its consequences on the region and international peace.

The decline of classical diplomacy did not come with the outbreak of the two world wars, but rather when states attempted to hijack the League of Nations and reshape the regional order in pursuit of their interests, which ultimately resulted in two deadly wars and a nuclear catastrophe.

Foreign Policy is a subject of public opinion in democracies. Public voices shape the behaviour of states, but the hyper-nationalist public sentiment has surged in India, with growing anti-Pakistan sentiments. Since 2014, the public perception has been engineered with misinformation, prejudice and Hindutva jingoism.

A perfect archetype of Nazi Totalitarianism, where minds, memories and identities were controlled for ideological absolutism. Populist regimes lack accountability for their foreign policy attitude, allowing them to align their local political manifestations with statecraft.

As the peace in the contemporary era is under strain, the Cold War history is evident of such rational actors caught between the dual imperatives of war and peace. Wars can be avoided, and conflicts can be resolved if diplomacy is valued. Accusations, miscalculations, and escalations are likely to end with chaos and catastrophe.

International peace is not just built on the conceptual foundations of the United Nations (UN), and other supranational organisations. It is built and sustained by states. International bodies assist in preserving peace and stability through rules and laws.

The crisis of state sovereignty and diplomacy is embedded in the modern problems experienced by states. Another catalyst that jeopardises modern-day state sovereignty is the speed, range and destructiveness of advanced weapons driven by technology, different ideologies, and the vital national interests of states. Conflict resolution is

undermined in the shadow of glorified armed capabilities of states, enabling actors to resolve conflicts with confrontations rather than cooperation.

The success of peace through regional cohesion is reflected in the international political theatre due to the complex interdependent system of economies and political relations. Regional peace serves as a basis for international peace. The choice of war and peace is an open book of options for states, but the moral reminders from the past stand as instructive precedents for states in their decisions making.

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Operation Sindoor and India's Defense Indigenization Effort – Rebuttal

Summra Hamid

The Pahalgam attack was an Indian failure and response of the brutalities that have been happening inside Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The Kashmiri's never accepted their occupation and continued to fight against the occupiers. The Kashmiri guerrilla fighters had been using different tactics to get rid of the occupied force, and continued to face forced disappearances, mass killings and other number of brutalities against the Muslims of IIOJK. It is to be noted that the attackers operated for an extended period of time, apparently questioning victims before executing them. These reports were conveyed by the Indian outlets such as Indian media reports, themselves. Considering these reports the separatists'/freedom fighters had sufficient time to execute their plan with no fear of interruption, showcasing that they were well aware of the presence and schedule of the armed forces.

The statements used by Lt Gen Sanjay Verma in his recent article, quoting, 'Operation Sindoor' as a 'Watershed Response' to the Pahalgam attack of April 22, 2025, portrays only one-side of the picture, giving the impression of the actions of the Indian armed

forces positioning them as a strategic success and bold innovation in counterterrorism doctrine. This version of the story, however, is fundamentally wrong, propagating the operation as a right and successful attack without regard to the disproportionality of this action. Unfortunately, the international community completely ignored the imprudent legitimacy, and the disturbance it caused to the stability in South Asia. 'Operation Sindoor' was not a success story of accuracy and determination but an act of escalatory ambition that was intended to target non-military and civil installation, which did not accomplish its declared goals, and availed resilience of the Pakistani nation and its international image. Not only this but his whole argument revolved around the change in strategies to gain war goals, showing the intentions of initiating wars again against Pakistan. Other than this his article pulled special focus on two things i.e. Institutionalized and robust R&D; and Structural reform in capability building which further strengthen the fact that India's intentions to destabilize the region won't stop here. The amendments throughout the paper that he has suggested pay special focus on the fact that next time they execute a successful

attack. Ironically, the Lt, missed including Pakistan's response to protect the state and sovereignty of the state. It should be noted that the biggest failure was the incapability of their pilots to fly Rafael jets. This counterargument is a harsh refutation to the arguments presented in the opinion piece, pointing out the idea of Pakistan's restraint, military performance, and support abroad and showing the strategic errors of India.

The 88-hour operation Sindoor of the calibrated strikes established a new matrix of military response to India where precision and a technological touch were featured. Nevertheless, this description overlooked important failures and exaggerations. According to reports of the Interior Ministry of Pakistan and media of the country as well as the Al Jazeera media organization, the strikes by the Indians were aimed at the civilian settlements such as the mosques and madrassa's which included small children and killing 31 civilians. India calling itself as a biggest democracy failed to protect the basic rights and violated international law by attacking the innocent civilians yet showcasing that its image as a strong democracy and protector of human rights is actually a not true. Essentially, the deployment of BrahMos missiles and drones in populated areas such as

those in Bahawalpur begs the question: could India be accurate with the said claims? India justifies its strikes against terrorist facilities by the absence of independent proof, the UN investigations for example. The fact that Pakistan calls to be investigated by Transparent International investigation which India denies implies that another country would be trying to hide civilian casualties or may be an independent unbiased investigation would expose India more.

When India was blaming JeM for the attack, the Resistance Front (TRF) claimed the responsibility of the Pahalgam attack further casting India of wrapping blame on Pakistan-based groups due to a plausible false flag operation. Moreover, the Lt Verma opinion piece poster has already presented a distorted figure of information in India, The Hindu and the fact-checking websites like Factly have revealed that Indian assertions of catching the Pakistani cities or hitting Karachi port as false. More so, there were news channels which publicized themselves with claims about taking Port at Lahore which is not geographically present, to begin with. There is a contradictory narrative and propagation of lies on the side of India which is countered by Pakistan through its own information campaign comprising a 20 pages' document with video evidence. Moreover, Lt also

interpreted a unified political support of India as an advantage, although such consideration ignores the lack of legitimate interest in the operation as well as its regional implications, whereas, on the contrary, the same gap was identified to be countered by the government regarding its future policies.

The Pahalgam attack in India is based on false intelligence interception as India blamed participation of an expelled Pakistani Army commander, Hashim Moosa, however no evidence was found against him. In the Sky News interview, Defence Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Asif insisted that the attack was a false flag operation based on the retracted claim by TRF. The fact that India rejected the call by Pakistan that an UN-led investigation to put a stop to such cases and acts of sabotage is not firming its accusations. The operation worsened the rifts between India and Pakistan necessitating the mediation of US to broker a ceasefire on May 10, 2025. The international community felt sympathy towards the diplomatic initiatives of Pakistan such as a closed-door meeting in the UN Security Council and even the Iran proposal to mediate the conflict.

The assertion of the opinion piece that there was strong international support in favor of India is exaggerated in view of the fact that the

global powers did not want to support India but rather de-escalate. The opinion column goes to the extent of commending the technological prowess of India pointing to locally developed systems quoting BrahMos and Akash, but (BrahMos is based on the Russian cruise missile technology showing it is not a local technology. Nevertheless, the military actions of Pakistan portray their strength and endurance. The level of western propaganda reached new limits as according to a German daily newspaper ‘Neue Zurcher Zeitung’, blaming Pakistan quoted that “Pakistan has refuted the story of Indian impunity criticizing that Pakistani-shot down a Chinese-supplied air defense that triggered India to attack its capital, Islamabad.” However, the events of May 10 proved otherwise, Operation Bunyan al-Marsus, reputed Pakistani reprisal attacks, making the world witness Pakistan destroying Indian military infrastructure demonstrating that an inferior defense budget (\$9 billion vs. India \$78.7 billion) cannot preclude an ability to strike back.

The calculated measures of retaliation of Pakistan meant that there was no wholesome intervention, which is in line with its diplomatic campaign to have a ceasefire. This restraint was opposed by the aggressive stance

of India, and it had threatened the stability in the region. The opinion article supports the view that R&D and acquisition reformation is necessary to counter capability shortage in India, however, the Pakistani point of view evinces that over-dependence on emergency purchases (INR 40,000 Cr) by India is an indication of taking Pakistan for granted. Pakistan uses cost effective systems, and the effectiveness of these systems against the strikes by India means that the defense ecosystem at Pakistan is stronger than the disjointed procurement process by India. The opinion writing acknowledges the fact that India had the capacity shortfalls, and emergency purchases address only a few gaps. The Operation Sindoor revealed that, India had been using imported munitions (SCALP, AASM Hammer) and therefore have delusional Atmanirbhar.

Operation Sindoor was not a watershed response, but an escalatory mistake that shed innocent civilian blood, and did not included Pakistani involvement even after their video-taped confessions against them. The fact that Pakistan has been able to provide effective military response and diplomacy, including demand of an independent probe that has allowed it to convey its narrative of resistance is a direct opposite of the Indian theme of victory. The fallout of such operation in terms of recent tensions in the region and spread of misinformation demonstrates the strategic overreach by India. The urge by Pakistan to restructure the international monitoring of such conflicts along with its demonstrated military and diplomatic capabilities makes it a responsible state that aims to establish stability in such an unstable area.

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Law vs Unilateralism: The Indus Waters Treaty in Peril

Alamgir Gul

Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) signed in 1960 with World Bank as its facilitating party has been mentioned as an act of rare success of functional treaty between Pakistan and India. Even wars, political enmity, and drastic changes of dynamics in the region did not affect it since over sixty years as it ensures clear distribution of river-waters: Pakistan has been given the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab and India gets Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. For Pakistan, this is not a hypothetical framework of diplomacy, it is the basis of its agriculture economy where almost 80 per cent of the farmlands rely on the western rivers.

Digital Iron Wall

Such stability was seriously tested in April 2025 when India unilaterally declared the treaty to be in abeyance after the so-called terrorist attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir. The latter term of abeyance possesses no operation under the law touching treaties and flatly contravenes the provisions of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT). The VCLT only allows suspension to occur mutually, or upon evidence of material breach which is a

requirement that India has not fulfilled. Since the inception of the IWT, Pakistan has been in compliance with the same.

The unilateral suspension of India in the built-in dispute resolution process and the fact that it does not intend to participate in the same is a deviation of the provisions of international law. Such moves do not only hurt bilateral relations, but also weaken the validity of treaties in the world on different levels. When this happens the integrity of international law starts to crumble because every major state may do the same with binding agreements and suffer no repercussions.

In contrast, the reaction by Pakistan has been anchored completely on legal means. Under Article 9 of the IWT, Pakistan turned towards the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. Although India boycotted the proceedings, the Court did keep New Delhi informed as the proceedings took place.

In August 2025, the PCA produced a landmark decision in favour of Pakistan where it was ruled that India has a clear obligation to permit the free flow of western rivers to run and not to change the flows due to its hydroelectric schemes at the cost of

Pakistan carrying much water as downstream beneficiary. More importantly, the Court rejected the argument presented by India that its decision to suspend the treaty altered the jurisdiction of the tribunal and also the validity of the treaty.

The Pakistan government which accepted the decision of the court in a welcome move, characterized it as “a thumping re-affirmation of the rights of Pakistan as the legally lower riparian state.” It emphasized that it was binding as far as the award is concerned and that India should, as far as it is bound, comply fully with the obligations of the treaty in letter and in spirit. The same was reaffirmed as the statement highlighted that Pakistan is committed to the Indus Waters Treaty as a commitment to regional peace, and as a precedent of resolving disputes by employing peaceful legal processes.

This decision is of importance in several aspects. To Pakistan, it preserves an existential asset and justifies its patient, rules-based policy. To the international community, it proves the principle that legal systems serve as the right place of settling matters even in cases that are politically delicate.

This shows, how smaller states can protect their interests against international power politics through perseverance, clarity of law, and use of international institutions. The win also serves as a lesson that when one follows the rule of the law and does not pay off with tit for tat, things can have a concrete result.

But now the game turns into the real deal of enforcement and not legal win. India is not that compliant. Failure to respect the award, Pakistan might be forced to root it to international court, or appeal to the United Nations. These would ensure that the conflict remains within the letter of international law where Pakistan stands in an advantageous ruling.

The agriculture, food security, and livelihoods of the rural population of Pakistan can be devastated without continuous supply of the western rivers. IWT is not just another piece of paper it is a promise which ensures that millions of Pakistanis may get access to the water they rely on. There is even the threat that the collapse of it will not only damage Pakistan but destabilize the larger region taking away one of the few long-term agreements achieved between two nuclear-armed neighbours.

The question posed by recent Indian actions is a disturbing one in the sense that should one of the longest lived treaties of modern times be able to be put in abeyance at any time by one side, what should the rest of the world think of its international agreements? This is the reason why the position of Pakistan is especially important outside the South Asian region. It is wrong to argue that maintaining the IWT is only about upholding water rights, it is also about upholding the integrity of international law against the insidious influence of unilateralism.

At least, the law is presently in favor of Pakistan. The award of the PCA is binding and the treaty survives. The question that will remain to be seen is whether this results in enduring compliance due to continued diplomatic pressure as well as the desire of the international community to demand compliance with the rules based order.

International law must mean something, and that means some respect must be paid to it even when it is most inconvenient to the violators.

The IWT has survived over 60 years since it maintained the reference to mutual survival and not a zero-sum game. To save it today would mean something like renewing that

allegiance, not only by India, not only by Pakistan, but by all who are concerned that law should come ahead of unilateral desire.

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***From Deterrence to Destabilization:
India's Missile Quest and Global Security***

Nomeen Kassi

The currently circulating news regarding India's expected missile test on the 20-21 August 2025 is raising eyebrows globally. The longest-ever NOTAM has been issued for a range of 4700km. It is suspected that India might be testing Agni-V or Agni-VI missiles. It is to be noted that these are nuclear-capable missiles with a range of 5,000 to 8,000 km for the Agni-V, while the Agni-VI is expected to have a range between 8,000 and 12,000 km. The concerning matter here is that the Agni-V can strike targets in most of Asia and parts of Europe, and Africa. Similarly, the Agni-VI, with its longer range, could reach targets across Europe, Asia, Africa, Alaska, and Northern Canada. Such expanded missile ranges do not align with India's minimal credible deterrence because they exceed the suspected threat range posed by Pakistan and China. The question here is, why would India want to acquire such an immense range of missiles?

A prestige-driven pursuit and a desire to seek prominence are the primary motives for such expansion. This extension of missile ranges

beyond the South Asian region showcases that India's ambitions are not only of regional dominance but also a desire to become a global power. Theoretically, India's behaviour can best be explained by John Mearsheimer's "Offensive Realism", which theorises that states maximise their power to gain dominance and hegemony in an anarchic world. This Offensive Realism is then countered by "Defensive Realism", where states try to balance the power of an oppressor through different international tools. This action-reaction pattern could perpetuate a global arms race. The increase in the military of one state causes a security dilemma for another state, which then tries to balance. This cycle leads to a snowballing effect, engaging the entire world in a power display.

India's ambitious missile program could thus become a catalyst for a global confrontation and the spread of arms, profoundly influencing the fragile strategic stability between China, India, and Pakistan.

India's ambitions to project itself as a regional hegemon and global power through its military expansion play a pivotal role in shaping its national security strategy, which seems to lack a vision. Although India has been very vocal about its military expansion being China-centric, it has failed to explain its intentions of acquiring missiles that range beyond China. The expansion inevitably heightens uncertainty, thereby posing a global risk. The enlargement of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles on a significant scale, in addition to their increasing range, adds to the negative variables that collectively raise the risk of an unintentional war breaking out. The ongoing ballistic missile development signifies that India is implementing a new and more dangerous strategic dimension.

The unresolved disputes and a lack of confidence-building measures have created an environment of mistrust, pushing India and the globe toward a dangerous path that could lead to a nuclear exchange. India's ambitious missile program could thus become a catalyst for a global confrontation and the spread of arms, profoundly influencing the fragile strategic stability between China, India, and Pakistan. The three nuclear-weapon states in Asia must remain well-informed of each other's vital strategic technologies to avoid a

crisis. Notably, the United States (US) has played a key role in India becoming a global threat. Facilitating India's admission to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) club and advocating for Indian membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), despite India's track record, carries the wrong lessons for the global non-proliferation regime.

The expanding nature of India's growing missile range has serious implications, threatening global peace and stability. The acquisition of such a missile creates a misguided notion of protectiveness. Thus, while India may also attain a false sense of security, on the flip side, it will exhibit aggressive behaviour and adopt a coercive regional and global posture. Consequently, it erodes global peace by exposing the world to the risk of war. Thus, in South Asia, India is challenging the deterrence equation. Over time, these missile tests will bolster India's confidence and encourage it to test its doctrine of limited war.

Furthermore, the acquisition of long-range missiles will likely increase India's appetite for pre-emptive strikes and coercive diplomacy, a possibility already reflected in its nuclear doctrine shifting from "Minimum Deterrence" to "Maximal Ambition." This is

because India may be influenced by the idea that these missiles can create regional hegemony and allow it to dominate states through power projection, as seen in its failed attempt to coerce Pakistan in the recent conflict. Therefore, presumed incentives to pre-empt in a crisis would be difficult for military planners to resist. A reinforced belief of having acquired a decisive technological edge would promote more aggressive behaviour globally and substitute traditional diplomacy, posing a significant risk to regional and global peace.

In this context, it is important to recognise that uncertainty about state intentions can never be fully eliminated, and the same applies to India's expanding missile program. While India may believe that greater power improves its chances of security and influence, such ambitions risk fuelling instability and undermining global peace. This uncertainty may not be eliminated completely; however, efforts can still be made to reduce it to a level where an arms race can be prevented and an accidental crisis avoided.

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Nuclear Apartheid in South Asia

Sadia Zahra

While Pakistan advocates peace and follows non-proliferation norms, the global arms control regime continues to reward defiance and penalize restraint in South Asia. The arms control and non-proliferation regime, once established to guarantee peace and international security, has now grown into the subject of political manipulation by powerful states. This has been seen nowhere more than in South Asia, where Pakistan, which has always advocated for peace and strategic restraint, is marginalized and punished, and India is given the upper hand and armored. “Pakistan’s nuclear stance is responsible and self-restrained, but it is penalized, not rewarded.”

A vivid example of this double standard can be seen in the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2008, when unprecedented nuclear cooperation was extended by the United States to a non-NPT state, establishing a nuclear hierarchy in the region. All this discrimination not only hampers the validity of the international non-proliferation policies but also disrupts the fragile security status in the South Asian region.

India has been a tremendous beneficiary of the exceptionalism in the international nuclear

order. The Indo-U.S. deal enabled New Delhi to practice the nuclear trade even without signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The same year, India also obtained a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), effectively circumventing the need for full-scope safeguards. Moreover, countries such as France, Russia, and Australia have already signed bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements with India, legitimizing its status outside the NPT.

Comparatively, Pakistan, having a similar nuclear profile, has not been granted such an integration. Despite the enactment of strong export control regulations and aligning with the spirit of nonproliferation agreements, Pakistan is denied entry into the NSG and other key forums. According to SIPRI 2025, India currently has about 180 nuclear warheads compared to Pakistan’s 170. However, India has the full international acceptance and technological transfer, and Pakistan continues to suffer an embargo and suspicion.

Though Pakistan’s history demonstrates its adherence to nuclear safety and regional

peace. Following the nuclear tests in 1998, Pakistan quickly offered a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR), consisting of mutual missile restraint as well as conflict resolution and conventional balance. This suggestion is still lying on the table, yet it has been disregarded by both India and the West.

Pakistan has also voluntarily adopted export control standards that are aligned with the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Wassenaar Arrangement. Its internal system, including the Nuclear Security Action Plan and the Centre of Excellence of Nuclear Security, has gained recognition internationally, including praise from the IAEA. Although Pakistan has not yet joined the NPT, it has proven much more compliant with non-proliferation values than most of the so-called responsible nuclear nations. “The Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2008 legitimized India outside the NPT while sidelining Pakistan.”

Furthermore, the Indian military’s adventurism and Western double standards always suppress the peace initiative and restraint of Pakistan. For example, in 2025, India launched (Operation Sindoor), on unfounded terrorism claims, similar to the Balakot airstrike in 2019, without presenting any credible evidence.

Such political acts violated Pakistan’s sovereignty. At the same time, India increased the use of drones and violations of the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC), as well as gave indications of an intention to abrogate its No First Use nuclear doctrine. Along with that, the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and MIRV-capable Ballistic Missiles such as Agni-IV and Agni-P pursued by India further destabilize the region, and compel Pakistan to have a credible deterrence.

To counter India’s Cold Start Doctrine, which envisions quick, limited incursions into Pakistan, Pakistan came up with tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs), including Nasr (Hatf-IX), to prevent conventional escalation. However, Western narratives tend to classify it as destabilizing weapons, disregarding the asymmetry of conventional forces and the strategic requirements behind them. As India seeks to continue to modernize its nuclear triad with international support, Pakistan’s defensive and limited nuclear capabilities are unwarrantedly described as a nuclear threat to global peace.

This shows that the international arms control system is flawed, discriminatory in nature, and serves power politics, rather than principle. Frameworks such as the NPT, the NSG, and

the MTCR are dominated by the P5 to reward its allies instead of imposing non-proliferation. India and Israel, which are the NPT outsiders, are recognized as responsible nuclear states, whereas Pakistan, despite voluntarily complying with key norms, is unfairly kept out.

Exceptionalism shall be ruled out by inclusivity as an approach to regain faith in the global non-proliferation regime. Pakistan deserves access to nuclear trade and technology just as India does. South Asian tensions must be eased through strategic dialogue, confidence-building, and mutual restraint. Western powers need to recognize that their so-called standards are not curbing proliferation, but rather transferring it. True peace should be just and not biased. “Pakistan offered a Strategic Restraint Regime, yet it was disregarded by India and the West.”

The nuclear stance of Pakistan is responsible and self-restrained, but it is penalized, not rewarded. The international non-proliferation system cannot continue rewarding disobedience and punishing compliance. The real stability in South Asia must be based on parity, not privilege. Unless the regime is equitable, it will continue to exist as part of the problem and not the solution.

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When the Aggressor Plays the Victim: India's Misuse of International Law

Sadia Zahra

When international law is used as an instrument to justify aggression, the aggressor begins to play the victim, which is precisely what India has attempted to do. India made another cross-border military attack (Operation Sindoor) in May 2025 on Pakistani soil, stating that it was a measured, proportional, and legal response to terrorism. Clad in the terms of international law, the Indian account presents this act as a textbook example of legitimate self-defense. But behind the well-used legal phrases and diplomatic pomp is a very bad precedent: a normalization of aggression, a perversion of the rule of law, and a flagrant abuse of the territorial integrity of another sovereign nation.

Let us be clear: India's strike was not a measured legal retaliation, but a wanton act of aggression that was not justified by evidence, lacked all legitimacy, and had disastrous effects on innocent civilians, including women and children. India says it has been targeting terror camps, but there is no such infrastructure in the regions bombed. Rather, the world witnessed the murder of unarmed civilians, the burning of

houses, and a breach of Pakistani sovereignty in the name of self-defense.

What's more troubling is that India has had the audacity to lecture the world about legal restraint whilst playing a blatant violator of the same norms it purports to uphold. Referring to the UN Charter, Article 51, and the Articles on State Responsibility (ARSIWA), India positions itself as an innovator of responsible state conduct. However, this story falls apart when it is examined. To begin with, international law does not allow a state to launch military attacks within another state without irrefutable evidence. India, once more, came up with no proof that could be verifiable on the involvement of Pakistan in the Pahalgam attack. No third-party inquiry. No neutral tribunal. Just accusations, followed by missiles.

This is not the first time India has performed the same old drama of accusing Pakistan without any facts or justification for illegal intrusion, expecting to be applauded for its so-called restraint. If the world were to accept India's logic, where vague suspicions of providing assistance to non-state actors

justify a cross-border attack, international law would collapse into chaos. Any powerful state would be able to attack weaker neighbors on the basis of its own suspicion. That is not international law; it is international anarchy.

India claims that it was acting responsibly, unlike other countries. But what about Pakistan's restraint? Pakistan has demonstrated maturity and respect for international norms, despite years of Indian meddling and sponsoring of terror in the country, especially in Balochistan. The fact that Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav was caught red-handed planning terror attacks on Pakistani soil is solid evidence that it is India, not Pakistan, that has been fueling terrorism. Still, Pakistan decided to use diplomacy instead of retaliation. That is what legal constraint looks like.

Before invoking international law, India should first understand it. Sovereignty is not conditional. It is not legal to violate it in the name of fighting terrorism, without international agreement, without any proof, and without responsibility. It is criminal. The sanitized language can never alter the reality that India invaded another sovereign nation on its own, killed its citizens, and then even dared to call it an exemplar of international behavior.

India should first dismantle the terror infrastructure it hosts within its own borders if it wishes to set a moral and legal precedent. The world has not forgotten the [Gujarat pogroms](#), [minority lynchings](#), or the [violent occupation](#) of Kashmir. Even Indian citizens and international human rights organizations have called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a [murderer](#). The term "terrorist" cannot be used selectively to justify cross-border attacks while disregarding genocide, oppression, and state-sponsored extremism within. Suppose Pakistan retaliated in the same way, launching an attack against India in response to its backing of Baloch insurgents. Would India praise it as a measured and legal action? Clearly not. India demands immunity for its own actions but refuses the same to others. This is not justice; this is hypocrisy.

International law was not written to protect the powerful from consequences. It was established to guard the peace, sovereignty, and rights of all nations, including the weak, against the caprice of stronger ones. The abuse of this law in India does not add to legal precedent; it is a perilous distortion of it. Operation Sindoor is neither a tale of justice nor a tale of restraint. It is a tale of government-approved violence, a

conveniently packaged fiction of defending oneself. The world should not be fooled. Otherwise, legality means nothing. And when India keeps trampling on the sovereignty of others yet prides itself on being legal, then it is not the law that is progressing, but impunity.

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The AI-Nuclear Gamble: A Risk We Cannot Afford to Ignore

Sadaf Nadeem

We live in a world seamlessly woven with the threads of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It curates our news feeds, drives our financial markets, and even assists surgeons in the operating room. But as we rush to automate our lives, we are approaching a terrifying precipice: delegating the most consequential decision in human history, the launch of nuclear weapons, to a non-human intelligence.

This is not speculation;

it is a terrifying possibility driven by an ongoing arms race. In the corridors of power in Washington, Beijing, and Moscow, a silent, high-stakes arms race is underway, focused on integrating AI into all aspects of modern warfare. The US Department of Defense's own AI strategy documents explicitly outline goals to leverage AI for "algorithmic warfare" to maintain military superiority. The stated goal is to create a "smarter" and more rational decision-making process, thereby eliminating human error.

However, this pursuit of technological perfection is a fool's errand. As the RAND Corporation starkly warns, integrating AI

into this delicate ecosystem could create "unforeseen pathways to escalation," leading to a catastrophic war that no one wants.

Despite stark warnings, the AI-based system remains attractive to military planners. In 1983, Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov faced a chilling moment when warning systems falsely signalled an incoming US nuclear strike. Trusting his instinct over the machines, Petrov judged it to be a malfunction, a decision that likely prevented global nuclear war. An AI system, however, might have processed the false data as genuine and triggered an irreversible launch sequence. AI could analyse trillions of data points in a millisecond (unachievable by even the most talented humans) and practically distinguish a real attack from a false alarm.

At a minimum, the treaty needs to have a legally binding commitment that the final authority to use nuclear weapons will always remain under "meaningful human control.

The core flaw in this logic is what experts refer to as the "black box" problem. The most advanced AIs learn by identifying patterns in

vast datasets in ways that are often opaque even to their creators. Leading AI experts, including pioneers like Geoffrey Hinton, have repeatedly raised alarms about the existential dangers of the technology they helped create, citing the unpredictability of these complex systems. If an AI recommends a retaliatory strike, how could a leader validate its judgment in the few minutes they might have? Trusting it blindly would mean ceding ultimate authority to an inscrutable algorithm.

Beyond this internal unpredictability, the AI system is also vulnerable to external threats and manipulations. Experts at the Belfer Center at Harvard University have warned that a potential adversary could feed false data into AI systems. Including the ability to create scenarios in ways that can manipulate the information an AI must rely on. Consider, for example, a hostile power employing various efforts to “spoof” satellite imagery that would look and behave like proper missile silos opening. In other words, the very complexity designed to make AI reliable could also become its Achilles’ heel. Suppose hostile actors can feed it convincing but false inputs, such as spoofed satellite images simulating missile launch preparations. In that case, the AI may respond exactly as programmed: with an immediate, automated strike. In trying to

perfect the system, one may risk building an exquisitely vulnerable system to digital deception.

But the most alarming scenario of all is the one that security analyst Paul Scharre, in his seminal book “Army of None,” terms a “flash war.” A conflict between two AI-enabled nuclear powers would not unfold over hours, but at machine speed. A minor glitch could trigger an automated chain reaction, spiralling into global thermonuclear war before any human can intervene. This issue is so grave that discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons have been ongoing at the United Nations for years, with many countries and civil society groups demanding a pre-emptive international ban.

Beyond these technical dangers lies a profound moral dilemma. The decision to use nuclear weapons is the heaviest moral burden a human can bear. It requires empathy, accountability, judgment, and a sense of proportionality. This aligns with the position of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has argued that retaining human control is a moral and legal necessity to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. Can we, in good conscience, delegate a judgment of such magnitude to an algorithm that understands probability but not pain?

The time to act is now. The nuclear-weapon states cannot wait any longer for disaster to force their hand. The nuclear-weapon states need to establish a new international treaty that specifically addresses the age of AI. At a minimum, the treaty needs to have a legally binding commitment that the final authority to use nuclear weapons will always remain under “meaningful human control.” In our relentless pursuit to make the nuclear button “smarter,” we risk committing the most unintelligent act in human history. Some buttons were never meant for machines.

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