

Balochistan Think Tank Network



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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 September issue reflects the intellectual depth and diversity of our research team, addressing the pressing strategic, political, and socio-economic debates of our time. Each op-ed brings to light a different facet of global and regional security, yet together they present a comprehensive mosaic of how competing interests, fragile narratives, and emerging challenges intersect in shaping the contemporary order.

The issue opens with a critical analysis of India's false flag operations and collapsing narratives, exposing how orchestrated threat perceptions unravel under scrutiny. This piece underscores the dangers of manufacturing security crises for short-term political gain, while eroding credibility and trust in the international system. Building on this, the discussion on climate devastation and blurred national security expands the frame to non-traditional threats, reminding us that the destabilizing effects of climate change are no longer peripheral but central to national survival, governance, and long-term resilience.

From here, the debate moves into the domain of nuclear politics. A thought-provoking reflection on why Africa has refrained from developing nuclear weapons offers insights into global disparities in security choices, while another piece scrutinizes India's Agni-V test, asking whether such advances serve genuine security needs or are motivated by prestige and competitive signaling. The critique of India's nuclear ambitions as a global nightmare adds urgency, warning how unchecked escalation deepens insecurity not only in South Asia but across the world. This theme is reinforced by the examination of India's refusal to accept Pakistan's Strategic Restraint Regime, which illustrates a pattern of reluctance toward cooperative security measures, and the reminder that the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty could not have endured, underscoring the enduring necessity of cooperative mechanisms in times of rivalry.

The issue also turns to the economic and social dimensions of security. A sharp analysis of Trump's tariff strategy situates U.S. trade politics within the broader context of global economic uncertainty, while an exploration of the economic costs of a broken classroom

culture highlights how dysfunctional education systems undermine long-term economic growth and societal stability. These contributions remind us that security cannot be confined to borders and weapons; it is equally about classrooms, markets, and livelihoods.

Equally notable is the call to reimagine Pakistan–India relations, which challenges entrenched hostilities and invites a reconsideration of pathways to cooperation and peace. At the same time, a provocative reflection on the 9/9 Doha attack and Washington’s role in enabling Israel broadens the conversation to Middle Eastern geopolitics, questioning alliances and covert facilitation of conflict. The volume closes with a sober analysis of the illogic of nuclear disarmament in the contemporary era, where idealism is repeatedly overshadowed by the hard realities of strategic competition.

Together, these op-eds capture the interconnectedness of traditional and non-traditional security concerns. They reveal how false narratives, nuclear ambitions, climate fragility, economic pressures, and regional rivalries collectively shape the fragile architecture of today’s world. This September issue is therefore not only a compilation of viewpoints but also a collective reflection of our research team’s commitment to informed analysis, critical inquiry, and policy relevance.

Editor

Dr. Siraj Bashir Baloch

India's False Flags and Collapsed Narratives

Shah Meer

The media has always been a player in conflicts, not just a reporter. Globally, the media often aligns with state agendas, shaping international perceptions. During the recent India-Pakistan conflict, large-scale fake news, misinformation, and propaganda campaigns were conducted by the Indian media.

The Indian political and military leadership relied on false and baseless claims during the conflict. The Indian Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh's remarks a couple of days ago show that the campaign has not ended, and they continue to claim a false victory for political support after failing to establish a `new formal` and receiving a strong response from Pakistan. "In Operation Sindoor, New Delhi persistently weaponized information to undermine regional stability." In the contemporary Indian statecraft, the calculated use of misinformation has emerged as a pivotal tool, particularly in shaping its strategic

posture towards Pakistan. In Operation Sindoor, India persistently relied on misinformation in the wake of its unsuccessful aggression against Pakistan, and even months after the ceasefire, the Indian information campaign continues unabated.

In a recent public hearing, India's air force chief said that New Delhi had shot down six Pakistani aircraft during the aerial standoff by India's Russia-made S-400 surface-to-air missile system. However, no international observer has corroborated the claim since the days of the war. Even New Delhi never publicly proclaimed its unfulfilled dream, and continues to face criticism from the opposition parties in India and the general public. New Delhi employs a calculated use of misinformation to achieve political objectives. Empirically, it sounds more persuasive. In Operation Sindoor, New Delhi persistently weaponized information to undermine the

regional stability. Initially, on April 22, 2025, India violated Pakistan's territorial integrity, associating Pakistan with terror-sponsoring and involvement in the Pahalgam attack without any credible proof or indicators affirmed by any fact-finding mission.

It spread misinformation and, in disguise, legitimized its aggression. Later on, Indian media flooded the digital space with misinformation. Some cases even involve direct territorial occupation of mainland Pakistan and coastal areas. An evident aspect of the recent crisis was the blatant use of disinformation by the Indian government and its national media, whereby information spaces were flooded with a relentless stream of fake news and manipulated narratives, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. The immense scale of India's disinformation campaign raises questions about the veracity of India's claims and positions. "Indian media flooded the digital space with misinformation, turning war into a nationalistic spectacle." Fake videos,

selective news reports, and emotional appeals in Indian media in the form of propaganda made the so-called Operation Sindoor a nationalistic spectacle that influenced the perceptions of the Indian public and attempted to influence perceptions across the world as well. This has been a deliberate disinformation campaign since the Pahalgam incident, a false flag operation by the Indian government. Arguably, dominating the adversary in a high-stakes situation remains a source of 'legitimacy intensifier'. It becomes more favorable when the polity is run by a far-right regime. It can increase the vote-bank, adds to the reputation of the leader, and, in short, supports the ruling regime, a phenomenon famously known as the rally-around-the-flag effect. However, if the situation turns otherwise, it erodes the legitimacy and brings long-term decline in public support. The question thus remains the same: when Pakistan shot down 5 Indian jets, including 3 Indian Rafales, corroborated by the international observers, and shattered India's great

power ambitions, New Delhi remained reticent. Why was India not publicly proclaiming it during the days of the conflict? When India's international standing was at stake and the country was desperately looking for diplomatic support? It is much clearer and evident that India failed to inflict any military loss and disadvantage on Pakistan. Now, to satisfy its public and turn the world's attention away from its false flag and military failure, India is relying on such baseless claims. Any government, objectively stating, would proclaim operational achievements in a high-stakes situation to achieve legitimacy and boost the morale of its warriors. It does so to project its power and psychologically paralyze its adversaries. However, New Delhi remains silent and months after the aerial confrontation it realizes to the public its achievement, a remarkable feat that is a power modifier.

"When Pakistan shot down 5 Indian jets, New Delhi remained reticent." It envisions that the Indian policy elite and military officials become bewildered in a situation of war, losing confidence and strategic discipline, and forgetting what is feasible and what is not. Hence, it unveils a notion that India, with such strategic confusion, is more dangerous with nuclear weapons. It debunks that a nuclear India can cause miscalculations and inadvertence that can undermine regional stability.

Publication Link:

<https://stratheia.com/indias-false-flags-and-collapsed-narratives/>

ShahMeer

(Research Assistant, Balochistan think Tank Network)

The Dilemma of Climate Devastation and Blurred National Security

Harsa Kakar

The last few days proved to be among the most tragic for Pakistan, especially in the north. Climate change has yet again hit Pakistan with floods and climate-induced devastation. Flash floods occurred in 2010, 2022, and now again in 2025. These flash floods are a result of unusual rains, cloud bursts, and landslides, sweeping through villages and causing widespread destruction. Around 145mm of rain has been recorded in various cities. Consequently, more than 730 casualties have so far been caused, and around 930 people have been injured since June 2025. This situation has a direct impact not only on the livelihood of people, but also on the non-traditional security of Pakistan, having resource scarcity and poverty already on the line. For this, urgent measures need to be taken overcome this devastation in

particular and to decrease the impact of climate change on the country in general.

Economic Crisis

Floods in a country tend to damage everything that comes on their way. It destroys livestock, crops, trees, and other infrastructure. It takes away essential resources with it, alongside humans' livelihood. Floods in 2025 also ravaged agriculture, crops, and livestock, primarily affecting the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. This will lead to an acute food shortage. Along with that, it intensifies other socioeconomic issues of the country, explained later. To begin with, having the economic crisis at its peak, the country in such times needs resources to manage disasters and a financial backup, which Pakistan clearly lacks at the time. The 2022 floods in itself brought a loss of \$40 billion with it. This time around, the intensity of the floods and the areas it spread to seem to be slightly less than that of 2022.

An early report of the UNDP suggests an

initial loss of \$30 billion as of now, and more is to be measured.

Secondly, with a population of 251.3 million people, Pakistan's poverty rate stands at 42.4% as of FY 2024-2025. In such a situation, when the country is hit by floods, another 9 million people face the threat of falling below the poverty line, fueling social unrest and vulnerability. During the 2022 floods, an estimated 8 million people were displaced. This time, around 24,000 people are reported to have been rescued by the Pakistan Red Crescent, and whose homes are yet to be restored.

In times of weak socioeconomic conditions, Pakistan's security faces non-traditional security threats. Firstly, the country faces increased resource scarcity due to all the damage caused to the crops, harvest, livestock and agriculture, resulting in food insecurity, inflation, social unrest, and finally increased crimes and instability.

Water Insecurity

Regionally, Pakistan is face-to-face with water insecurity, that too at a time when strained ties with India have led to abeyance of the Indus Water Treaty and Pakistan's dependence on those waters continues. To the northwest, Afghanistan also keeps pressing for its increasing dependence on the Indus waters due to its landlocked geographic location. This keeps ties with Afghanistan strained.

All of the consequences are interconnected with each other. What is important is how to overcome these crises and how to prevent them in the future. For that, in the short term, Early Warning Systems in Pakistan need to be installed. AI tools can also be referred to for this. This will help in early warning of incoming climate-induced disasters. Secondly, the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of the NDMA needs to be strengthened for a predictive analysis of crises and handling disasters with other NGOs and humanitarian groups.

In the longer run, Pakistan needs to develop useful infrastructure like the Flood Management of Kachhi Plains in Balochistan, a project of 2025, which is still in the pipeline. Additionally, elevated roads and nullahs, and broad sewerage pipes and pathways need to be made on an emergency basis. Also, roads made of water-absorbent gravel need to be constructed that absorb and filter rainwater and collect it below in the larger sewerage pipes. This water can be stored for commercial purposes as well. Moreover, forestation is the most important need of Pakistan today. Pakistan needs to restore mangroves in coastal areas and ensure afforestation in the north. Last but not least,

Pakistan needs to strengthen the NDMA and increase its restoration mechanisms. To ensure that its accountability, funding, and transparency are prioritized.

Publication Link:

<https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/climate-induced-devastation-poses-non-traditional-security-threats-pakistan>

Harsa Kakar

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Why Isn't Africa Nuclear?

Shahzadi Irrum

History belongs to those who hold power because it is power that determines who is remembered and who is forgotten. In the global order, not all nations are equal, and some are never meant to be. Africa, rich in history, resilience, and potential, has been deliberately kept at the margins of strategic power. Not because it lacks the capacity to rise, but because its rise threatens the very foundations of global dominance.

Why has an entire continent been excluded from nuclear power while others remain heavily armed? Because a strong Africa challenges the existing order. It disrupts the carefully maintained balance that keeps it dependent. It demands a seat at the table, not as a subject, but as a sovereign power. And for those who have long benefited from Africa's weakness, that is the real threat. To fully understand this exclusion, we must

look beyond surface-level nuclear capability.

It isn't merely a question of scientific advancement or technological progress. Instead, it is rooted in a deeper, more complex story, one shaped by the legacies of colonialism, the maneuvers of great power politics, and a racialized global order that continues to benefit from Africa's resources while turning a blind eye to its rightful place on the global stage. Although Africa's abundant uranium reserves have powered nuclear ambitions elsewhere, with countries like Niger and Namibia supplying a significant portion of the world's fuel for bombs and power plants, African voices remain excluded from the strategic decisions that shape the world's future. This silence isn't incidental – it is deliberate, and it is time we ask why.

Though many African nations take pride in their continent's nuclear weapon-free status, pride cannot protect them from a world order still ruled by those who hold the ultimate tools of destruction.

The truth is, Africa didn't simply step away from the nuclear path; it was pushed away.

The decision to remain nuclear-free, often viewed as a moral stance, was influenced by intense pressure from powerful countries with significant stakes.

When African nations signed the Treaty of Pelindaba in 1996, guaranteeing never to build nuclear weapons, the world applauded. But behind the applause was relief from former colonial powers and global giants, who worried about what a nuclear-armed Africa could mean for their interests. After all, a continent with its own nuclear deterrent wouldn't be as easy to influence, exploit, or ignore. Instead of supporting Africa's right to develop strategic capabilities, a major power pushed for disarmament in Africa. They called it peacebuilding. But in truth, it

kept the power balance heavily skewed in their favour. African uranium powered their bombs and lit their cities, while Africans were told they did not need such power themselves. One can see that they did not disarm Africa to save it; they disarmed it to dominate it.

And beneath that domination lies a deeper, more insidious force, racism. Africa's exclusion from the nuclear world is not just geopolitical; it is racialized. The global nuclear order has always been selective about who gets to have power and who does not. As author and activist Arundhati Roy puts it, nuclear weapons have been kept at "the very heart of whiteness". That means decisions about who can build the bomb, who is trusted to use it, and who is worth listening to have all been shaped by racial bias.

Libya exemplifies how this racialized order manifests in reality. When Muammar Qaddafi, an African leader, dared to pursue nuclear weapons, he was not regarded as a sovereign equal; he was quickly labelled

a threat. His nuclear ambitions were met with hostility and containment, demonstrating the double standard where nuclear capability is only accepted in the hands of the powerful. NATO later bombed Libya under the guise of protecting civilians, and Western-backed rebels tortured and executed him on camera.

Libya, once Africa's most prosperous nation, was shattered, and its people suffered in a failed state created not by civil unrest but by deliberate destruction aimed at crushing the dream of a powerful Africa. Libya was punished for dreaming of African strength, and now the Sahel region faces a similar fate. Nations like Niger, whose uranium powered Western nuclear arsenals for decades, are rising to reclaim their resources and sovereignty.

In return, they face harsh sanctions and military intervention. Their message is unmistakable: Africa can power our empires, but it has no right to power itself. The idea of a nuclear-armed Africa makes

many uncomfortable, not because it is unsafe, but because it challenges a world that still does not see African states as equals.

The same racial double standard became painfully obvious after Africa took a collective step toward disarmament. When African nations signed the Pelindaba Treaty, pledging never to pursue nuclear weapons, South Africa stood out as the only country on the continent that had actually built the bomb during apartheid. However, when the white regime saw its political power declining, it rushed to dismantle its arsenal of six nuclear bombs in 1991.

The dismantling was not an act of goodwill toward global peace; it was a calculated move to prevent nuclear capability from ever falling into the hands of the Black majority as they took political control. The weapons were not destroyed in the name of disarmament; they were destroyed to maintain racial control. Africa's nuclear absence is not a symbol of peace; it is a

reminder of power taken, denied, and controlled. Though many African nations take pride in their continent's nuclear weapon-free status, pride cannot protect them from a world order still ruled by those who hold the ultimate tools of destruction. Disarmament in Africa was not a mutual agreement; it was an imposition.

And in that imposition, the message is clear: Africa can mine uranium but can never hold the fire. Until that double standard is broken, there will be no true

justice, only chains disguised as treaties, and no real peace, only the illusion of safety granted by those who still hold the trigger.

Publication Link:

<https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/why-isnt-africa-nuclear/>

Shahzadi Irum

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India's Agni-V Test: Why? And for What

Usama Khalid

On August 20, 2025, India carried out the flight test of its already inducted Agni-V Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) from the Integrated Test Range site located in the coastal region of Odisha. According to the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of India, this particular flight test 'validated all operational and technical parameters'. However, the problem is not with the test alone, but with the timing of the test as it has been perceived threatening development not only for the regional, but for the global security order as well.

The Indian categorization of Agni-V missile from ICBM to Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) raises certain questions among strategic circles globally. A renowned US think tank Center for Strategic and International Security (CSIS) has a separate designated program with

regards to missiles known as Missile Threat. It categorized Agni-V based on its

stated range of 5000 km as ICBM and facts do not lie.

However, the broader significance of this development is hard to be ignored. Agni-V is strategically a very important arsenal in the inventory that India possesses right now as it is nuclear capable delivery vehicle and as recently as last year in March, India equipped the very same Agni-V delivery vehicle with the Multiple Independently-targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) technology. The integration of MIRV further provided strategic leverage to India, but threatened the already fragile deterrence equation of South Asia. MIRVing a delivery vehicle is cost effective as a single missile can carry up to 5-8 warheads that can each follow its own independent targeted trajectories upon the terminal phase and can hit multiple targets, simultaneously. MIRVing is starkly destabilizing as it has the ability to overwhelm the adversary's air defence

mechanism. Whereas, another theory with regards to the re-classification of the Agni-V from ICBM to IRBM is heavy payload that resultantly reduces the range of this delivery vehicle. Now, the debate follows, why? The possible response is, in the absence of stealth bombers like B-2 that were used recently by the United States for dropping bunker buster on Iranian nuclear facilities, India could use Agni-V with heavier payload as a probable bunker buster weapon for the pre-emptive striking against the nuclear facilities of Pakistan to try to disarm the country in a crisis situation. Diplomatically, India is trying to re-establish a more flexible, yet proactive ties with another regional rival China. Relations of both the nations have been on the verge since 2020 deadly border clashes. The confrontation and cooperation are two different sides of the same coin in Indo-China relations, but the recent visit by the Chinese foreign minister to India and Indian PM Modi's willingness to participate in the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit that will be

held in China from 31 August to 1st September is predicted an ice-melting between them. Analysts have described the evolving ties between India and China as a result of the recent imposition of tariffs by US on India for importing oil from Russia amidst the Russia-Ukraine war and also threatened to double the tariffs if India does not discontinue. While the actual shift in the Indo-US relations has emerged in the aftermath of May 2025 developments when both nuclear armed neighbors of South Asia – Pakistan and India – engaged in conventional cross-border escalations. The crisis was averted from getting out of control by the mediatory intervention of United States, India not only denied, but criticized US role in de-escalation, despite initial backdoor channel diplomacy which proved to be the beginning of the deterioration of ties between both states. In the evolving scenario, Indian offensive missile program must not be discounted of the fact that it is a dangerously threatening development for the global security and stability based on the increasing ranges.

Additionally, the fresh Notice to Airman (NOTAM), India issued on 15 August to vacate the extended area of around 5000 km range from the coast of Odisha, is a possible signaling that further testing is underway. Experts have predicted that Agni-VI – which is believed to be possessing 8000-10000 km of range with a heavy payload and 14000-16000 km with lighter payload – might be underway for a near future testing. Agni-VI, if successfully tested and operationalized, will outclass all of its predecessor. The Indian missile program in the recent years have taken an aggressive turn by the incorporation of ranges going beyond the regional parameters, cemented the argument of prestige driven strategic ambitions of India. Agni-V which lies in the ICBMs category can cover all of Pakistan and China, but terming it IRBM in the aftermath of the

recent test has put further suspicions with regards to weapons utility and applicability by inducting heavier payload in the delivery vehicle. The beyond regional ranges of Indian ballistic missile program should not be overlooked, instead they need to be scrutinized impartially by the international community, as it could not only destabilize regional security, but also threatens the global strategic stability.

Publication Link:

<https://strategicforecast.cissajk.org.pk/?p=22628>

Usama Khalid

(Research Officer, Balochistan think Tank Network)

Reimagining the Pak-India Relations

Asad Ullah Raisani

Pakistan has long struggled with a distorted image, deliberately shaped by certain stakeholders in India over the years. Those who sought to portray the country as weak and a terrorist state ultimately attacked it, but the nation emerged victorious, turning the tables. Now, the third-longest-serving prime minister of the neighboring country cannot even deny that it was New Delhi that approached the current US President, Donald Trump, for a ceasefire. But will peace be possible between the two South Asian nuclear rivals, India and Pakistan? There are reasons to believe both yes and no. Let's debunk this. "Anti-Pakistanism has become the fuel Hindutva ideologues rely on to win seats." Firstly, since Hindutva politics have taken root in India, the country has become unsafe even for those who advocate peace, regardless of their faith, religion, caste, or creed. The dividing line in India today is simple: Hindutva or anti-Hindutva; no other option remains. This flawed ideology began peaking when Bal

Thackeray's goons destroyed cricket pitches in their own country to prevent Pakistan-India matches. Even today, they cannot separate sports from politics. In contrast, even under the military rule in Pakistan, cricket matches between the two countries were played, and talks came close to reaching a deal on the Kashmir conflict. However, with the boycott of Pakistani artists and the absence of cultural exchange programs, the lack of people-to-people engagement will only increase apathy and differences—or, in the worst-case scenario, fuel hatred between the people of both nations. Secondly, anti-Pakistanism has become the fuel that Hindutva ideologues rely on to win seats and secure votes. In contrast, it is the fourth consecutive democratic term, and no hate speech against India has been used by mainstream political parties in Pakistan. While in India, even a layman, after listening to the so-called WhatsApp graduates of India, can see that the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is no longer the party once led by respected figures like Sir Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but is now dominated by Modi bhakts (devotees).

The following is largely driven by hate speech against Pakistan and even against Muslims. Anti-Pakistan rhetoric has become so essential for visibility in India that not only a large segment of BJP politicians but also instructors, sportsmen, content creators, media persons, academics, artists, and even comedians find it necessary to mock Pakistan and Pakistanis to gain more attention and viewers.

Thirdly, the limited drone strikes appear to be a new tactic employed by the sitting government in New Delhi. Such actions compel Pakistan to retaliate, and inevitably, people on both sides bear the consequences in terms of material damage and loss of life. This cycle of hostility risks alienating the current generation of the region—young people who do not even know one another personally, yet share

languages, a common history, and an appreciation for each other's cinema. Instead of fostering understanding, these policies are likely to breed resentment and hatred. As for who benefits from this, the answer is not difficult to discern. "Pakistan has never hesitated to play cricket against India, even under difficult circumstances."

First, the Indian people should start questioning their ministers, whom I will not call leaders, about unnecessary hate speech. Pakistan has repeatedly expressed its willingness to engage in dialogue, and despite India's stronger record in major cricket tournaments, Pakistan has never hesitated to play against its neighbor.

When Mr. Gandhi described the partition of the subcontinent as a 'vivisection,' how can subsequent Indian leadership justify labeling its former part as a 'threat'? Why is it that Pakistani forces have never violated Indian sovereignty on the pretext that Indian-backed groups are spreading chaos and terrorism in Pakistan? Ultimately, the entire region, and even the international

community, is put at risk if the BJP government continues with reckless actions such as those of May 7–10, 2025, which were highly miscalculated.

Secondly, there are better and more reasonable options available in India for voters—leaders who are secular and pro-peace. The problem, however, is that hatred against Pakistan and Muslims is so deeply rooted that advocates of peace are often labeled as enemy agents or, at times, even told to ‘go to Pakistan.’ Despite this, many influential content creators, politicians, and academics, who deserve recognition for calling a spade a spade, continue their struggle for a secular India. They should consistently make efforts to ensure that the people of India vote for the right people.

Admittedly, Pakistan also falls short on many indicators, but when it comes to dialogue with India, neither Pakistan’s civilian nor military leadership, nor any other influential force like its public, has shown reluctance to pursue peace with its

neighbor. The same willingness is needed in India. Even if Pakistan is blamed for cross-border terrorism, dialogue remains essential: evidence should be shared to identify those responsible, and demands for action should be put forward. What cannot be justified is waking up one day, citing upcoming elections, and deciding to attack Pakistan. Diplomacy and cooperation are necessary for the nearly 1.72 billion people living on both sides of the border.

Thirdly, investors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders on both sides can play a pivotal role in ensuring that trade between India and Pakistan is not compromised or suspended under any circumstances. Both nations continue to face widespread poverty, and increased trade has the potential to support policymakers in improving the lives of their citizens. “Hatred against Pakistan and Muslims is so deeply rooted that advocates of peace are often labeled enemy agents.” Enhanced economic cooperation would also facilitate greater interaction between Indians and

Pakistanis, ultimately paving the way for mutual respect and peace. Over time, this could allow sports and cross-border cultural programs to gain prominence, provided that trade relations remain uninterrupted. Dialogue must remain the primary response to both emerging and longstanding disputes. Suffice to say that sustained dialogue, economic cooperation, and people-to-people engagement remain the only viable path forward. After all, it was the “Inglorious [British] Empire`s” colonial

legacy that sowed deep divisions and animosity in the subcontinent; otherwise, both Jinnah and Gandhi had envisioned Pakistan and India as cordial neighbors.

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<https://stratheia.com/reimagining-pak-india-relations/>

AsadUllah Raisani

(Research Officer, Balochistan think Tank Network)

India's Nuclear Dreams, World Nightmare

Shahzadi Irum

THERE is a truth about human nature that has echoed through centuries: the more we have, the more we want.

Nations, like individuals, are no different. India's expanding nuclear program is a striking example of this restless appetite. What began as a tool of defence has evolved into an unchecked pursuit of nuclear dominance, advancing not only New Delhi's ambitions but also the anxieties of the global community. The haunting question remains: can this ambition ever be satisfied, or is it already spiraling into a global nightmare?

India's nuclear history reflects desire rather than restraint. From the Smiling Buddha test in 1974 to the Pokhran-II blasts in 1998, each step has been driven more by prestige than by security. Today, the push is louder than ever. Nuclear-powered submarines such as the INS Arihant, the provocative issuance of the longest-ever NOTAM, the rapid expansion of the Agni

missile series and even ventures into hypersonic and space-based military technology reveal a strategy beyond deterrence. India wants to be seen as a global nuclear heavyweight. But in chasing this goal, is it strengthening security—or recklessly steering the region towards instability?

The development of the Agni VI missile underscores the scale of India's ambition. Reportedly capable of carrying up to ten nuclear warheads and striking targets 10,000 to 12,000 kilometers away, this weapon goes far beyond regional defence. It places India in the same category as the United States, Russia and China. Such advances not only contradict India's past claims of restraint but also expose its double standards: speaking of peace while racing to build weapons of mass destruction. Can a nation that professes peace while amassing such destructive power truly be trusted?

India's nuclear trajectory is now a global concern. By building weapons capable of reaching distant continents, it disrupts the fragile balance that has kept nuclear proliferation in check. Every addition to its arsenal raises the risk of miscalculation or conflict that could spiral out of control. Instead of securing peace, India's ambitions have magnified dangers, transforming its nuclear program into a potential disaster for the world. New Delhi may see its growing arsenal as a passport to global power, but in reality, each step entangles it further as a proxy in Western strategies against China. This nuclear pride is painted weakness—a borrowed strength posing as independence. Worse, by stretching its reach beyond South Asia, India multiplies the number of nations that may perceive it as a direct threat. In seeking recognition, it risks provoking hostility and isolation that no arsenal can defend against.

To conclude, India's nuclear pursuit is not simply a regional issue but a global hazard. Ambition has replaced caution and power has overshadowed responsibility. As weapons grow deadlier and reach across continents, the line between deterrence and disaster blurs. India's unchecked nuclear drive destabilizes South Asia and threatens to ignite a wider arms race, pushing global security towards collapse. The stakes are perilously high: one reckless act could unleash consequences beyond borders. The world must ask itself—will it watch as one nation's dream of dominance becomes a nightmare for all?

Publication Link:

<https://pakobserver.net/indias-nuclear-dreams-world-nightmare/>

Shahzadi Irum

(Research Assistant, Balochistan think Tank Network)

Trump's Tariff Gambit

Musavir Barrech

The second term of Donald Trump as US President is reshaping the world trade with his hardcore tariff policy. Tariffs are levies on imported goods and Trump is wielding them as a tool to drive countries into new trade agreements. Some nations have signed agreements with the US, but others, like India, have not. India is subjected to a tariff of 50% on its products entering the US, the highest in South Asia. This action has brought strain relations between the US and India, who are close allies that have signed some key agreements, notably LEMOA, BECA and COMCASA as a military and strategic partners.

The buying of Russian oil by India is one of the reasons behind the US tariffs on India, as the U.S. views this as indirect support to Russia in the ongoing war with Ukraine that America does not want to see Russia win. First, Trump has imposed a 25 percent tariff on India on the purchase of Russian

oil, and this was increased to 50 percent to put more pressure.

Nevertheless, India has responded to this with the import of more Russian Oil. Latest statistics show that India has purchased 2 million barrels of oil per day in August 2025, compared to 1.6 million in July. Russia also offered 5 percent discount on its oil, making the deal even more attractive for India. This indicates that India is prioritizing its own energy requirement over the demands of the US, and this presents a dilemma to the Trump strategy. The other factor that led to the tariffs is the rapidly growing economy of India. India is projected by experts to surpass the US to become the second-largest economy in the world, by 2075, after China. This may threaten the U.S. economic dominance. Hence, Trump is applying tariffs to slow down the economic growth of India. Through taxation of Indian products such as textiles and medicines,

he would be hoping to undermine India's status in international markets.

In future, India may adopt the Chinese policy of depending less on the US trade and diversifying its trade with Asia and Africa. To the neighboring nations, such as Pakistan, it will imply a weaker India in the region, yet this also carries the threat of instability in the face of trade wrangles spilling over to security matters.

This tariff tension has another aspect as well. India and Pakistan engaged in a nuclear-nearing 4-day war in May 2025. Trump says that because of his threats of tariff both countries agreed to ceasefire which prevented the region from plunging into nuclear disaster. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi however, refutes this by claiming that the ceasefire was the joint decision of both India and Pakistan and was achieved without the pressure of the US. This has caused bad blood between Trump-Modi, creating difficulty in reaching a consensus on tariff issue. The tariff plan

by Trump is not only a trade policy, but a method of remaking the world relations. He wants to dictate the moves of India, be it oil buying, or even economic development by seeking to dominate India. However, the insubordination of India indicates that emerging superpowers are less eager to obey the instructions of the US.

Discounting oil to India by Russia is an indicator that other nations are moving to provide their own gap fillers to the US policies. For a country like Pakistan, this gives them an opportunity to forge a relationship with nations like Russia to promote its geo-economics goals. Meanwhile, it increases the danger of new conflicts in case trade wars are aggravated.

To sum up, the strategy of tariff by Trump is a high stakes game. It tries to safeguard the US interests but costs it the major partners such as India. The world witnesses the extent of the economic strength of America as India counters act by purchasing more Russian oil and finding

alternative markets. In the case of South Asia, it is to navigate this new reality, economic, security and diplomacy to stay on the right side of trade and stay stable. Trump's tariff gambit will reshape the world trade, or they will only continue to divide. The world is waiting to know whether the

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Why India Declined Pakistan's Strategic Restraint Regime

Zafar Khan

Pakistan's potential adversary, India, long ago tested its nuclear weapon capability in 1974, the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion. When India tested its nuclear weapons again in May 1998, Pakistan immediately responded to the Indian nuclear tests on 28 May 1998 to restore a long-awaited strategic balance in the region despite the relentless international pressure. While understanding the logic of nuclear deterrence and risk of military escalation to a nuclear level, Pakistan proposed to India to create a strategic restraint regime (SRR), a type of arms control regime that would primarily aim to create restraint on the growing conventional force asymmetry in South Asia. Although both India and Pakistan have never been part of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) since the very inception of the NPT, the creation of the proposed SRR would promote crisis stability, reduce the risk of a bigger arms race, avoid war-fighting strategies, and lay out grounds for strategic stability in South Asia. India declined and thereby missed the opportunity for sustainable peace and stability. Since then, both the South Asian nuclear rivals have confronted several serious military crises, including the May 2025 that could risk serious military escalation to a dangerous level. Fortunately, nuclear deterrence remains reliable, robust, and intact in South Asia. The risk of nuclear weapon use often triggers third-party intervention, in this case, the US potentially bolstering deterrence stability and avoiding large-scale war between the two archrivals. India has never been interested in third-party intervention. Its hubris would intensify the conflict in South Asia, risking dangerous escalation that its military leadership may not desire in the first place Why Missile

Defence Like The Iron Dome Undermines Strategic Stability

Why did India decline the proposed SRR in South Asia, and why does it continue to be adamant about the perceived idea as part of broader nuclear confidence-building measures? This article unpacks this imperative further under the essential characteristics of hubris, escalation dominance, prestige, and damage limitation strategies for counterforce targeting in South Asia. Each of these rationales may best explain why India may aspire for these strategic objectives rather than clinging to any type of restraint regime in the foreseeable future.

Hubris for a dangerous confidence

With its increasing economic wherewithal, strategic partnership with the leading players in the international system, and material sources for enhancing its conventional and strategic forces, India apparently has intensified its military conflicts with Pakistan. India expects to win its political and military objectives through

its economic and material sources, providing India with the dangerous confidence to launch preventive strikes whenever and however India's politico-military leadership may desire.

But India failed to achieve such objectives every time it planned to pre-empt Pakistan with its irrational political gestures against a nuclear Pakistan. Such failure is clearly depicted in the recent credible presentation by Lt. Gen. (R) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, Adviser to the National Command Authority, on 16 September 2025. Despite realising the danger of escalation, one wonders why India, in hubris for a dangerous confidence, looks for a space for waging a limited war against nuclear Pakistan. Undertaking such preventive strikes without evidence of a security threat from Pakistan is not only illegal under international law but becomes highly destabilising for the South Asian region. Trump's Tariff War on India, Bonhomie with Pakistan: Strategic Shift or Political Theatre? | Ep.88

As India becomes aggressive while trying to cross certain red lines in each crisis, the risk of serious military conflict escalating to nuclear use in South Asia may potentially increase to a dangerous level

Escalation dominance for damage limitation strategy

Part of the reason why India does not desire to accept the proposed SRR is India's aspiration to retain escalation dominance with its increasing deterrent forces capability. India through the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has been developing several mega strategic projects such as the ICBMs, MIRVing, BMDs, SLBMs, TNWs, hypersonic missiles, and parts of emerging technologies such as anti-satellite, drones, and lethal autonomous weapon systems. All such weapon systems not only make India more aggressive and offensive in South Asia, but also such strategic imperatives would further boost India's aspiration for escalation dominance. This is to keep an extra hedge against Pakistan in both conventional and strategic force

domains. The recent credible sources reflect that India has more nuclear weapons than Pakistan, which may reflect India's strategic aspiration for a damage limitation strategy. India would desire to have lots of fissile materials, nuclear warheads, and delivery systems to keep the advantage and limit the damage during a serious military crisis against its potential adversary in the broader South Asian region. Resultantly, this may take India beyond the required security imperative for prestige and power projection in the Asian region.

Strategic departure from the minimum and the NFU

The failure of not becoming part of SRR and being an outlier to the NPT, including that of its increasing deterrent force development, India has long departed from the minimum deterrence it had earlier perceived. India falls into a strategic dilemma, that is, what is credible against Pakistan may not be minimum against China, thereby what is not minimum

against China may be much more against Pakistan than required. It is a strategic puzzle that needs more serious deliberation and future scholarship. India's Four-Day Fumble: Skirmish Or Strategic Setback?

The Indian security leadership may not be able to fix this increasing dilemma to opt between the two strategic pillars. Given its aspiration for pre-emptive strikes against Pakistan, many in India have already suggested the Indian security echelon depart from India's traditional No-First Use (NFU) nuclear option. It is not surprising for Pakistan that India's NFU has been modified because India has already brought dramatic shifts in its draft nuclear doctrines of 1999 in 2003.

Aggression vs restraint

Both 2019 and 2025 military conflicts indicate India's intensifying aggressive force posture against Pakistan, trying to test the resolve of Pakistan. India is departing from political modesty, patience, and restraint to become more offensive

under the nuclear threshold in South Asia. As India becomes aggressive while trying to cross certain red lines in each crisis, the risk of serious military conflict escalating to nuclear use in South Asia may potentially increase to a dangerous level that India and many regional and international players may not desire to happen in the first place. Making a terrorism episode as a pretext to strike Pakistan is not a viable strategy. It is fraught with weakness for dangerous escalation, especially when the potential adversary, in this case Pakistan against India, is also in possession of credible nuclear weapons.

South Asia with an ever-increasing nuclear flashpoint – way forward

All that being noted, it is not out of context to argue that South Asia has become an ever-increasing nuclear flashpoint. The danger of escalation to a nuclear level is working in the background of all the intensifying military conflicts between the South Asian nuclear rivals. The viable way forward to prevent such untoward military

conflicts is the practice of restraint, political modesty, and agreeing on some form of SRR. More importantly, there is a need to shun the hubris for escalation dominance, power projection, and war-fighting strategies. The Decisive Role Of Youth In South Asian Regime Change

and broader South Asian strategic stability. Pakistan has offered such peaceful and durable initiatives for a dialogue. It is now India's turn to decide what to do next. One hopes that better sense prevails, and India logically follows the imperative that Pakistan proposed a long time ago.

Credible CBMs, nuclear CBMs, and more dialogue are needed for sustainable peace

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India's IWT Suspension Could Not Have Stayed

Nomeen Kassi

After the false flag operation in Pahalgam on 22nd April 2025, India took two of the most imprudent steps against Pakistan. Firstly, on April 23rd, India confirmed that the IWT would be held in abeyance, effective immediately. The suspension is among the several steps India has taken against Pakistan, accusing it of backing cross-border terrorism – a charge Islamabad flatly denies. Other than suspension, India launched attacks inside Pakistan, challenging its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In response to this attack, India lost six aircraft, including at least three Rafale fighters.

Simultaneously, India falsely and without any evidence accused Pakistan of being involved. Regardless, Pakistan offered an investigation, which India refused. Pakistan tried diplomatic means to solve the issue; however, India responded non-diplomatically- leading to a military conflict

between the two. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar called the Indian steps "immature and hasty" in a television interview. While the Prime Minister of Pakistan declared that any attempt by India to "stop or divert the flow of water" will be considered as an "act of war." Regardless of Pakistan's declaration, the suspension itself is a dangerous move in international affairs.

Bashir Ali Abbas, in his article "Water as leverage: India's IWT suspension is here to stay," argues that the treaty will remain suspended. However, this is not as easy as it is said. The suspension of the treaty can result in a huge conflict between the two rival states. Water has been a major issue between India and Pakistan since the subcontinent was partitioned. It is evident that India has always been violating the treaty provisions; therefore, the IWT functions as a rare success story. Once again, it has suspended the treaty against

its provisions. The treaty does not have any clause through which it can be suspended unilaterally. The treaty itself stipulates that it can only be modified or terminated through mutual agreement between the two countries, whereas in this case, Pakistan has not consented to a withdrawal from the treaty. India's unilateral suspension is fraught with peril, legally unsound, and undermines one of the strongest examples of transboundary water cooperation in the world. The sudden termination of IWT does not just breach international treaties but can also pose threats to the overall stability of the region. According to Article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), treaties have to be followed in good faith (*pacta sunt servanda*). Article 62, which admits to withdrawal by a material change of circumstances, is narrowly construed in international law, and the change of circumstances that have been foreseeable or are of an internal political matter. Utilizing the legal doctrine that terrorism sponsored by Pakistan has caused this

change is a misapplication of this legal principle, since issues of terrorism have been a reality since the late nineties, and it is not enough to change the essence of obligations of a water-sharing arrangement.

Bashir Ali Abbas states that "India has sent at least four notices to Pakistan, asking to renegotiate key provisions of the Treaty with a particular focus on its dispute resolution mechanism. India's immediate concerns related to the World Bank initiating two parallel tracks of dispute resolution, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) and the Neutral Expert (NE), while India preferred only the NE. It seems like India, under its false flag operation, wanted to suspend IWT as a larger aim. India has always built projects that are against the treaty provisions, to name a few- Kishanganga and Ratle hydropower projects. India has always preferred NE to solve the disputes, as its decisions are nonbinding, whereas the decisions of PCA are binding. India, with its wrongdoings, prefers a non-binding

mechanism so it can continue what it has done best – violate treaty provisions.

Once again, PCA has come into play. The court has given a ruling in favor of Pakistan. On 8th August 2025, it issued a binding Supplemental Award on the interpretation of the IWT. The court has declared that India should “let flow” the water of western rivers for Pakistan’s unrestricted use. Furthermore, the court has ordered that the court’s awards are binding on both parties. This award comes as a big win for Pakistan and a major loss for India and its undiplomatic channels to tackle the issue. Before this ruling, in June 2025, PCA held that India could not unilaterally hold the treaty in abeyance. As a response, India declared that it did not recognize the court or its decisions. Additionally, PCA said that India had not participated in the arbitration proceedings and had repeatedly objected to the court’s competence.

Whereas on Pakistan’s behalf, a representative from the Foreign Office (FO) said Pakistan welcomed the PCA’s landmark decision, stating “Pakistan

Welcomes the Award Rendered by the Court of Arbitration on the Issues of General Interpretation of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)”. Later, the government of Pakistan issued a similar statement, welcoming the court’s award. This decision of the PCA limits India’s ability to manipulate river flow and mandates strict adherence to treatment criteria. Additionally, the decision protects Pakistan’s water rights. This situation shows how Pakistan has been reinforcing the principle of cooperative dispute resolution under international law, whereas India attacked Pakistan based on just accusation and no proof. Pakistan remains fully committed to the implementation of the treaty rules. Pakistan urges that “The high priority, at this point, is that India and Pakistan find a way back to a meaningful dialogue, including on the application of the Indus Waters Treaty”. Further, Pakistan calls on India to resume normal treaty functioning and faithful implementation of the court’s decisions, ensuring that water

remains a source of cooperation, not conflict in South Asia.

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Economic Costs of a Broken Classroom Culture

Hamza Nasir

The University is supposed to be the engine of innovation and generator of economic growth. However, when academic institutions concerned with conformity over creativity, they not only discourage innovation but create economic inefficiencies at large. University which does not develop critical thinking, and adaptability is unconsciously creating an impotent labor force that is unable to cope with such competitive global economy.

The culture in many Pakistani universities has been mired in traditionalism, and hierarchies are quite rigid. Almost all classrooms involve authoritarian practices driven by fear rather than curiosity. Faculty members themselves the victims of an underfunded system that oppresses its workforce, enforce discipline by means of punitive measures such as public humiliation and arbitrary grading over developing inquiry and open dialogue. If treated as a student, the student is not

viewed as an active partaker in the process of learning, but as a passive recipient of information, expected to memorize, not to question.

It is a system of inertia that ends up with intellectual disengagement. Both motivation and the generation of creativity are suppressed by the students – two essential qualities for an economy driven by knowledge and innovation. These results into individual disillusionment but also a collective economic liability.

This academic crisis represents significant economic inefficiencies. If universities graduate students who lack critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and the ability to work across disciplines, industry will suffer. This forces organizations to engage time and resources in retraining new personnel, extending on board and resolving productivity concerns. In high-

growth industries such as technology, renewable energy, financial services, and modern manufacturing, the structural bottleneck that results from a mismatch between academic training and real-world application can grow larger.

The academic environment is so inflexible, far from global trends. Institutions around the globe are adopting flexible learning, hybrid, and competency-based learning. But in Pakistan, many universities still have industrial age mindsets. They lack modernization in the form of rigid attendance policies, fixed work schedules, and little utilization of digital tools. Such a system offers very little support or flexibility for working students, single parents or individuals working in many careers simultaneously. The lack of adaptability prevents one from getting access to education and keeps one away from lifetime learning, a vital component to keep a competitive as well as a resilient labor force.

A watershed issue is the broken connection between the industries and the academicians. University curricula too, are designed in isolation, with hardly any input from what sectors they hope to serve. This leads graduates to have theoretical knowledge but do not possess practical experience and interdisciplinary skills, which are required by employers. or worse, internship opportunities, collaborations in research, and entrepreneurial training are not developed or even nonexistent. While this leaves students with insufficient skills to make this transition (from campus to career) it further widens the skills mismatch.

The macroeconomic consequences are staggering. A workforce that cannot innovate cannot compete. A university system that fails to inspire becomes a national liability. The examples of countries that have successfully transformed their education systems — such as Finland, South Korea, and Singapore — demonstrate that academic reform is not a

luxury; it is a prerequisite for economic growth. These countries invested heavily on modernizing pedagogy, reducing classroom sizes, incentivizing research, and integrating technology into learning environments. They recognized that human capital is the most valuable asset in the 21st century.

Pakistan, with its burgeoning youth population, stands at a similar crossroads. Pakistan deals with significant unemployment rates alongside minimal workforce engagement while its jobs sector transforms fast under global market shifts. Business growth by ignoring the academic standard would worsen economic disparities while wasting millions of youth potential.

The reform endeavor must begin with the foundation, which comprises of core instructional facilities known as classrooms. School faculty require increased remuneration and teaching training, as well as smaller teaching groups

that allow for meaningful student-teacher exchanges. The educational system should encourage interesting learning rather than penalizing innovative, critical thinkers. Students must have equal footing in their academic journey as educational partners who require freedom for independent intellectual development.

Educational curricula require transformation into formats which enable students to combine different disciplines and address meaningful real-life challenges. Educational institutions should build alliances with industry to maintain both important classroom knowledge and student preparation for professional roles. Institutions of higher learning must create centers for innovation combined with programs that support start-ups in addition to hands-on educational experiences. Technology represents an opportunity to make tradition accessible to all people while improving its standards.

The economic sustainability of any society depends on education as much as it does on social well-being. National productivity together with innovation and global competitiveness base their foundation on education systems. Graduates with credentials yet poor competencies produce no success for our students nor for our future generation.

Pakistan must choose between perpetuating a stagnant academic culture or embracing the reforms necessary to unlock its demographic dividend. The stakes are too high for inaction. Only a

reimagined, student-centered, innovative-driven university system can pave the way for a prosperous and resilient economy in the decades ahead.

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Doha's 9/9: Did Washington Enable Israel's Attack?

Shahzadi Irum

For decades, the United States (US) has positioned itself as the essential power in the Middle East, the guarantor of stability, the broker of peace, and the protector of allies. Washington has built its reputation on the idea that without its bases, weapons, and diplomatic influence, the region would descend into chaos. However, beneath this surface-level portrayal lies a complex reality, questioning whether the US genuinely seek stability in the Middle East. Stability would lessen the constant need for its “protection,” reduce arms sales, and weaken its influence over allies. Conversely, chaos keeps Washington relevant. And Israel, a key ally of Washington's in the region, has become the ideal tool to maintain this dual strategy.

This pattern has played out time and again. Whenever peace appears within reach, whether during

nuclear negotiations with Iran, ceasefire talks in Gaza, or regional reconciliation efforts, Israel strikes at the very moment diplomacy gathers momentum. The result is always the same: fragile trust shattered, talks collapse, and conflict resumes. And through it all, the US either turns a blind eye or tacitly facilitates the disruption. The Middle East has learned a bitter truth: while Tel Aviv executes the strikes, it is Washington that provides the cover and support that makes them possible.

The most glaring example of this destructive partnership came on September 9, 2025 – Doha's “9/9”. On that day, Israel carried out an unprecedented strike on Qatar, targeting Hamas leaders engaged in sensitive ceasefire discussions and exploring a two-state solution to end the Gaza genocide. A breakthrough was reportedly near, but instead of peace, Doha awoke to panic, destruction, and disbelief. The attack spoke volumes: Qatar has positioned itself as the hub of

mediation, one of the last tables where dialogues had a chance. By bombing that very table, Israel delivered a brutal message that peace itself is the enemy of its destructive ambitions.

Qatar's defences, so tightly tied to US command, stayed silent: no alerts, no warnings, no interception, which raises the uncomfortable question of whether these systems are truly ineffective or whether Washington itself gave the green light for the attack.

Yet the deeper betrayal lies not in Tel Aviv, but in Washington, because, despite being Qatar's chief security partner, the US neither warned nor protected it from the Israeli attack. According to analysts, Israeli jets, entirely US-manufactured, flew more than a thousand kilometres to reach Doha, crossing multiple airspaces constantly monitored by US radars. These aircraft are fully compatible with US detection systems and, therefore, easier to track. And considering the significant US military presence at Al-Udied, the claim that

Washington did not anticipate or detect the attack lacks credibility. Qatar's defences, so tightly tied to US command, stayed silent: no alerts, no warnings, no interception, which raises the uncomfortable question of whether these systems are truly ineffective or whether Washington itself gave the green light for the attack.

And this is exactly what makes the betrayal so deep. Qatar is not just a country in the Middle East; it is supposed to be one of Washington's closest allies, officially recognised as a major non-NATO ally, and the host of Washington's largest military base in the region. For years, Qatar opened its land and skies to the US, believing that this partnership guaranteed security in return. Yet when Doha itself was attacked, that belief was shattered. The shock was not only from the devastation caused by Israeli bombs but also from the realisation that the US, with all its soldiers, advanced radars, and what Washington presents as a security umbrella, stood idle

while an ally was left vulnerable and unprotected. For Qataris, the attack did not just shake their capital; it shook their confidence in the very ally they trusted most.

Many may ask, why did the US stand idle against such a dangerous provocation? The logic is cold but clear. It is widely argued that Washington may not maintain genuine peace in the region, because peace would weaken its predominant role as the indispensable powerbroker. Independent mediation, like Qatar's efforts in Doha, threatens to sideline the US's influence. By apparently letting Israel strike at the heart of those negotiations, Washington ensured that diplomacy failed, conflict resumed, and its justification for military presence and arms sales remained intact. Israel carried out the strikes, while the US claimed to be unaware, yet for anyone watching closely, the arrangement seems clear.

The broader consequences for Washington are severe. By allowing an ally to be targeted, Washington has gravely damaged trust in its alliance. The US claims to uphold international law, yet shields Israel's repeated violations. The strike has led many to question whether the US prioritizes its own power over its promises to allies. This event has prompted a reassessment of the US's role in the Middle East. If the US was not secretly involved in the Doha strike, it must take clear action to demonstrate its commitment to international law and its allies. The ongoing crisis in Gaza and the recent attack on Doha present a critical test of US credibility. The perception of US complicity will only deepen without meaningful steps to hold Israel accountable and to end the violence in Gaza. In the end, the US's credibility will depend on its actions, not just its rhetoric, and whether it chooses to prioritize the protection of lives and stability in the region.

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Illogic of Nuclear Disarmament in the Contemporary Era

Sher Ali, Atta Ullah

Since the beginning of the nuclear age, the international community consistently made efforts toward disarmament. However, the world saw both vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation. Nuclear-armed states are modernizing their nuclear forces.

Although there are notable breakthroughs in efforts to reach agreements on arms control and disarmament, the world remains far from achieving disarmament goals and is still on a long quest to eliminate nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons hold a key place in security policy. The latest report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) says nearly all nuclear-armed states, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea, are modernizing and upgrading their nuclear capabilities. Consequently, a perilous new nuclear arms race is

emerging, and reliance on nuclear weapons is increasing. This inevitably raises the question, is nuclear disarmament still logical and relevant? Signed in July 1968, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is considered the first major step aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation and ensuring disarmament, including the recognized nuclear powers under the treaty. Article VI of the NPT emphasizes the pursuit of negotiations in good faith to bring an end to the nuclear arms race, achieve nuclear disarmament, and promote general disarmament by nuclear-armed states. Article VI serves as the foundation for global efforts such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

However, nuclear weapon states under the NPT are not adequately fulfilling their

obligations and commitments under Article VI and instead continue to modernize their nuclear capabilities. They even provide support to their allies on nuclear matters in clear violation of the treaty. The Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) deal and the Nuclear Supplier Group's waiver to India are cases in point. It is important to note that nuclear weapon states are primarily responsible for progressing disarmament. Under the NPT, the division between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapon states is not supposed to be permanent as all NPT parties will move to non-nuclear weapon states. The current geopolitical landscape regarding nuclear proliferation, nonproliferation, counter-proliferation, and disarmament indicates a deadlock in the pursuit of a global zero (GZ). Two key terms, conceptualized in this article, may help explain the shortcomings in nuclear disarmament efforts under the grand bargain. The first is the security betrayal trap (SBT), which refers to a situation where security guarantees are betrayed, leaving a country exposed and vulnerable.

The second is disarmament deception syndrome (DDS), a pattern of negative consequences resulting from false promises made during the disarmament process. This situation is exacerbated by the fear of cheating among the nuclear-armed countries, "If we disarm, others might not." Hence any proactive action would leave some at some disadvantage vis-à-vis adversaries. The latest SIPRI report suggests that countries are modernizing their nuclear arsenals with a greater reliance on nuclear weapons, which undermines the efforts of arms control and disarmament. The abandonment of bilateral arms control treaties between the United States and Russia, alongside the failure to develop multilateral treaties on the subject, led to a lack of faith in arms control and disarmament.

In South Asia, India's prestige-driven global ambitions and expansion of its nuclear arsenal beyond a credible minimum deterrent is complicating security dynamics

in the region and beyond. This is further worsened by a purported strategic chain with cascading-downward influence on arms control, nuclear risk reduction, crisis management, confidence-building, and strategic stability in South Asia—induced by extra-regional powers. While offering no cascading upward stimuli for bringing regional stability, there are biases and discriminatory norms governing nonproliferation regimes and arms control and disarmament negotiations at the conference on disarmament (CD). This suggests not only why nuclear disarmament is not happening, but it also explains skepticism over the future of disarmament. For instance, Ukraine presents a novel case of SBT and questions the negative and positive security assurances/guarantees in conventional as well as nuclear terms. The Ukraine paradox cautions other countries, in a DDS, that their survival rests with nuclear weapons of their own. Even confidence in the nuclear umbrella and assurance by treaty allies is eroding. NPT-

member states are yearning for nuclear weapons and pose the greatest danger of proliferation.

Ukraine regrets abandoning its inherited nukes in the wake of its ongoing war with Russia. The withdrawal of North Korea from the NPT and the lesson it learned are that nukes are key to national survival. Similarly, Iran's pursuit of nuclear capability is considered inevitable for the country's national security. In this geopolitical context, it is hard to make countries believe in any negative as well as positive security in return for disarmament and de-nuclearization. Disarmament is also unlikely in today's world due to the changing technological landscape. Countries with advanced technologies and space-based capabilities can still threaten the survival of their enemies.

Emerging technologies are leading to increased conventional imbalances between rivals, which heightens reliance on nuclear weapons for crucial security

interests and could, therefore, serve as the ultimate deterrent. Moving toward disarmament requires five actions. First, there is a need for legally binding agreements to address the threats posed by emerging technologies. Second, nuclear powers should not support their allies' nuclear pursuits. Third, effective multilateral arms control agreements are required. Fourth, it is important to address biases within global frameworks. Finally, confidence-building measures (CBMs) between rivals are needed to resolve long-

standing disputes, help prevent arms races, reduce nuclear risks, and build hope for disarmament in the future.

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