Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon,* (Cornell University Press, 1989), 266.

Scholars delving into the effects of nuclear weapons, have looked at how vulnerabilities and fears have affected the behaviors of nuclear states. It is argued that when these two factors are mutual, countries will most likely not go down a deadly, dangerous route that leads to colossal carnage. If they, somehow, decide to tread that path, there would be no victors. These two phenomena mutual second-strike capabilities and the shrinking space for and possibility of military victory are weaved together dexterously by one of the most eminent nuclear strategists, Robert Jervis, in one of his acclaimed books titled, *"The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon".* 30 years down the line, the book continues to be critiqued, reviewed and referred to by anyone even remotely interested in concept of deterrence and strategy. That said, the book is not limited to discussing the nuances of nuclear strategy or how deterrence should be viewed vis-à-vis defense, but also delves into how the role of force changes as an instrument of foreign policy. One would be remiss, if the complementarity between this book and another one of Jervis' classics, *"The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy"* is not accentuated. Both masterpieces are premised on the argument that nuclear weapons have fundamentally changed the nature of warfare and statecraft.

It is only pertinent to discuss what Jervis' mentor and friend, Thomas Schelling said about mutual vulnerabilities. In one of his seminal works entitled "The Strategy of Conflict", Thomas C. Schelling explained the mutual fear of surprise attack among adversaries, quite compellingly. He argued that one of the motivations of striking first for A could be the fear that B, believing that A is about to strike, may

draw first blood. He further said that even a slight temptation for each side to go first exacerbates due to successive fears and apprehensions. This intimidation emanating from the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons is what might keep A and B from crossing the line. Also, both A and B will be concerned about the residual forces of each other, that can be used for a deadly riposte. Broadly speaking, Jervis uses this argument to buttress his thesis on the 'Nuclear Revolution'.

At the outset, it is important to succinctly highlight why Jervis terms nuclear weapons revolutionary. His refrain points to the sheer cataclysmic capacity of the absolute weapon and the speed at which that annihilation can be caused. This alludes to the importance of retaliatory wherewithal. The ability of nuclear weapons to wrought upon destruction way more than any other weapon, is something that amplifies how significant it is for an attacker to strike the adversary in a manner that leaves the latter with no capacity to retaliate. Jervis cogently asserts that mutual second-strike capabilities have made this virtually impossible. Based on this, Jervis goes on to enunciate that military victories are no longer possible. In order to give weight to his argument, Jervis looks back at early ruminations about nuclear weapons, strategy and fighting wars. He adroitly deals with what Hans Morgenthau called "Conventionalization". In repudiating the conventional ideas about victory and their non-applicability in the nuclear era, Jervis dubbed post-war comparisons between the victor and vanquished zero-sum. The strength of this critique cannot be gauged in totality without tying it to the other points articulated by Jervis.

Jervis' claim that gone are the days when military victory was possible, is buttressed by the veritable connection he makes between the phenomenon of hostages, the preservation of the status quo and the inexorable difficulty of achieving deterrence by denial. Jervis, indeed, was prescient. In the summer of 2017, a reclusive Kim regime in North Korea was up against the all-powerful Trump-led United States. The nuclear dyad was exchanging threats. It appeared as if

both parties to the conflict were equal. The power gap between the two countries did not matter one bit. That the imbalance between the two adversaries was immaterial, is a vindication of Jervis' de-emphasis on military and strategic balance in the book. That said, the imbalance between Pyongyang and Washington was and still is there for all to see. The question that should then be asked is this: why has the United States not taken out North Korea's nuclear weapons in a decapitating first-strike? There could be two intertwined reasons as to why the United States has been unable to carry out a splendid first-strike on North Korea's nuclear arsenal. One, the United States' ability to hurt its adversary is ominously curtailed because of the DPRK's ability to target what the former values. Though doubts are raised on North Korea's ability to deliver warheads, through long-range weapons, to targets inside the United States, there is no question about it hurts US' allies. Pyongyang can rupture Washington's security umbrella by effectively decoupling it from Seoul, and even Tokyo. All this is enough to signal the US that it cannot take North Korea's nuclear capabilities lightly or see it from a conventionalized lens. It needs to be stressed that the fear and vulnerabilities are mutual. This is what has engendered deterrence and caution. Two, a first-strike by the United States on North Korea's strategic weapons may still leave enough for the latter to mount a devastating retaliation against what the former endears. All this has largely kept both countries from crossing the tripwire. This is exactly what Jervis posits throughout his research-laden and exceptional book. From ominous sabre-rattling in 2017, both countries came to the negotiating table in 2018. Jervis has termed cooperation as one of the results of the hostage syndrome created in a mutual deterrence equation.

More tellingly, Jervis uses his reflections on the nuclear revolution to lend weight to his arguments that status quo is easier to maintain and that peace is one of the consequences of the nuclear revolution. Indeed, Jervis is right in adding John Lewis Gaddis' Long Peace thesis to the discussion. That nuclear weapons have not been used since

1945, is the biggest defense of Jervis' treatise. It also stands to reason that with resolve being directly proportional to the value attached to something being defended, status quos are hard to revise. However, the very resolve to stand firm and be risk-acceptant can be used to change the status quo, with little regard to the difficulty involved in doing so. It has to be acknowledged that the conditions added to the debate by Jervis, greatly limit the propensities of states to change the status quo. However, a status quo never satiates actors in a Realism-inspired global order. Thus, states will, and are trying to escape the effects of the nuclear revolution.

Jervis is the staunchest and most authoritative critic of the United States' countervailing strategy or whatever modern jargons it is couched in today. Such strategies and doctrines, in effect, are parts of efforts to circumvent mutual vulnerabilities and achieve escalation dominance and military victories. Therefore, deterrence stability cannot be ensured only by accounting for the nuclear revolution. Instead, deterrence stability and the continued preponderance of deterrence in the defense-deterrence tussle are being challenged by states. While the nuclear revolution cannot be ignored, states do try to elude it, putting pressure on the adversaries to follow suit. Mutual threats of colossal losses are an anathema to the unbridled application of military power by powerful nuclear-armed states against the weaker ones laced with nuclear weapons. This is an encumbrance for those that eye greater positions in the global system. Thus, conventional thoughts on power and security-dilemma do kick-in, leading to the adoption of the very approach that was propounded by the likes of Paul Nitze and Colin Gray.

As countries like India try to achieve compellence vis-à-vis their adversaries within a bilateral deterrence framework, the utility of nuclear weapons in ensuring peace is being attenuated. Jervis' nuclear revolution is not a one-way street; the effects that he talks about in his book can only show if sides uphold the much-dreaded mutuality of fear and susceptibility. Any side trying to tinker with the principles

that bolster deterrence, can lead to grievous ramifications, mainly due to ensuing cycles of 'perception and misperception', which quite fittingly is a title of one of Jervis' best books. This is also one of the factors as to why, in today's world, crises are more likely to occur. It is rightly suggested by Jervis that the reciprocal fear of escalation may caution states from rung-climbing. However, crises do take place, and there is no reason to predict that they won't be triggered in the future. What happens then cannot be choreographed in a simulation.

One can only hope that the makers of conflicts are more enchanted by the nuclear revolution than they are by the thought that a nuclear weapon is just like another weapon. Apart from being a part and parcel of all nuclear syllabi, this book should be on the tables of those that shape the dynamics of conflicts and peace. That said, it is likely that many will look askance at some of the implications of fully imbibing "The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution".

Reviewed by Mr. Syed Ali Zia Jaffery, Associate Editor, Pakistan Politico and Research Associate, Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research, University of Lahore.