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Assessing the Dynamics of US-Pakistan Relations in the Evolving Geopolitical Landscape of South Asia

Assessing the Dynamics of US-Pakistan Relations in the Evolving Geopolitical Landscape of South Asia

Dr. Taimur Shamil¹

Historically, relations between Pakistan and the United States have been exceptional and often underrated. Much of the discourse on Pakistan-US relations focuses on the downside of their bilateral engagement. However, a careful assessment of Pak-US relations highlights the areas where Pakistan and the US collaborated in crucial ways. A study of historical events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Taliban-US deal in Doha 2020 highlights Pakistan's critical role as a strategic player and partner with the US. Pakistan is also an important country for the US in the sense that the latter has sought the former's backing in crucial times such as during the US War on Terror after the 9/11 incident and subsequently, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. In parallel, as the great power competition between the US and China takes a new turn, Pakistan seems to be playing an essential role in the evolving global geopolitics and regional strategic stability of

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South Asia. In this process, China sees Pakistan as a key player in the region. Both China and Pakistan collaborate in several domains such as infrastructure development, energy, trade, and technology. In parallel, developments such as Indo-US defense deals, their increasing strategic partnership, and official US statements suggest that the US has put its relations with Pakistan on the back burner as it assigns India a net-security provider's role in the region. However, despite their strong partnership, US relations with India have faced challenges and downturns, especially after the planned killings of Americans and Canadians on their respective soil. Additionally, India is adhering to a policy of accommodation with China and is reluctant to get into serious confrontations against the latter. Against this backdrop, the paper argues that India's tendency to hedge its bets makes it an unreliable partner for the US. Hence, the US should create a balancing act by strengthening its relations with other regional states i.e., Pakistan. The paper suggests that Pakistan and the US reinforce their relationship on consolidated grounds by mitigating mistrust and strengthening shared understanding to achieve peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: Pakistan-US Relations, South Asia, Great power competition, Pakistan-China relations.

Introduction

Historically, the relationship between Pakistan and the United States has been exceptional and often understated in many respects. A thorough examination of their bilateral relations reveals a series of fluctuations, characterized by periods of both cooperation and tension. Their relationship

has been complex, alternating between close-knit cooperation resembling that of allies and tense periods where Pakistan has faced sanctions. Despite these trials, the relationship between the two states has demonstrated resilience and continuity. Recent geopolitical developments involving the great power competition between the US, and China, and the renewed Indo-US alliance have led to the understanding that the US has deprioritized its relations with Pakistan.² This perception may hold some validity, however, a more nuanced analysis grounded in *realpolitik* suggests caution in drawing such conclusions. The intensifying US-China competition and complex, and at times disorderly, alliance building between the US and India,³ creates new opportunities for both the US and Pakistan to retune their ties.

Pakistan has been an important country for the US in turbulent times in the South Asian region. From resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to participating in the War on Terror (WoT) and facilitating the American and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan has consistently played a crucial role in supporting US efforts to achieve regional peace and stability.⁴ The US President, Joe Biden's remarks to former Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, stating that "Pakistan is 50 times more important than Afghanistan," are widely cited.⁵ This statement highlights the comparative importance of Pakistan and provides insight into

^{2.} Ali, Syed Mohammad. "Managing US Relations with Pakistan in Uncertain Times: Opportunities and Obstacles." Middle East Institute, December 2023. https://www.mei.edu/publications/managing-us-relations-pakistan-uncertain-times-opportunities-and-obstacles.

^{3.} Tellis, Ashley J. "America's Bad Bet on India." Foreign Affairs, May 1, 2023. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/india/americas-bad-bet-india-modi.

^{4.} Steve Coll, "Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001" (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

^{5.} Mazzetti, Mark, and Ismail Khan. "From the Afghan Peace Deal, a Weak and Pliable Neighbor for Pakistan." New York Times, March 5, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/world/asia/afghanistan-pakistan-peace.html.

the perspectives of top policymakers in Washington D.C, regarding Pakistan's strategic significance in South Asia. However, recent trends have indicated a downturn in the strength of Pakistan-US relations, altering the discourse significantly. This shift necessitates a reevaluation of the bilateral relationship within the broader context of evolving geopolitical dynamics in the region.

This paper examines the contemporary contours of Pakistan-US relations in the backdrop of changing regional political dynamics. It focuses on the existing strategic environment in South Asia and aims to explore new dimensions and areas of cooperation between the US and Pakistan. This reassessment is integral for both states to adapt to the shifting geopolitical landscape and harness mutual benefits derived from bilateral cooperation and shared understanding.

Theoretical Framework

The paper utilizes the neo-classical realist theory to understand how systemic and sub-systemic undercurrents play key roles in bilateral relations and foreign policy formulation. This theoretical framework is employed to analyze Pakistan's stance and strategic importance, as well as the US approach towards the evolving geopolitical environment in South Asia. Through this lens, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Pakistan-US relations and the strategic decisions made by both countries.

While middle powers like Pakistan depend on systemic outcomes and changes to steer their foreign policy, great powers like the US also rely on middle powers at sub-systemic levels due to their strategically important roles. This interdependence fosters cooperation on important national issues to achieve desired outcomes in the region. Addition-

ally, this dynamic highlights how Pakistan and the US negotiate while pursuing their national interests. Negotiations are central to diplomacy, and it is crucial to recognize that nations evolve with systemic and sub-systemic changes. Finding common ground amid diverging interests requires prudence and strategic thinking. Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting effective cooperation and achieving mutual objectives in the region.

Neoclassical Realist theory considers domestic and *Innenpolitik* approaches, in contrast to classical realist theory, which focuses solely on structural outcomes. In their seminal work "Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics," Jeffery Taliaferro et al emphasize the "clarity of systemic signals," explaining that these signals are often uncertain and unclear. In such situations, the perceptions and misperceptions of leaders and bureaucrats play a crucial role in shaping policy responses to systemic signals. Taliaferro et al use the example of China and the US to argue whether the US should address the China issue through containment or an engagement strategy that can limit "China's risk-taking behavior."

The US approach to containing China and its tilt towards India elucidates its strategy towards the South Asian region, including Pakistan. The article argues that, despite the ambiguity of systemic signals and the evolving geopolitical landscape, sustained and continued cooperation between Pakistan and the US is essential. Pakistan continues to play a significant role in regional affairs and is likely to play an increasingly vital part in the future dynamics of South Asian politics.

^{6.} Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman. "Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

^{7.} Taliaferro et al. "Neo Classical Realist Theory of International Politics."

Pakistan-US Troubled Relationship: Who is Relevant for Whom?

Conventionally, Pakistan-US relations have primarily focused on the issue of Afghanistan for more than four decades. Through these definitive years, both states have experienced several ups and downs in their bilateral relationship.8 Afghanistan has been a significant concern for the US, particularly due to its prolonged military involvement in the Afghanistan War, one of the longest wars in its history. The prolonged engagement posed a significant domestic political challenge, primarily due to its enormous financial cost and limited achievements to present to the American public.10 Former American President, Barak Obama notably remarked that his predecessors had financed wars on a "credit card." Despite these challenges, the US conducted its longest war against terrorism with significant assistance from Pakistan, which bore considerable costs in terms of human casualties and extensive economic damage.¹²

In addition to this, Pakistan has faced occasional yet perpetual criticism from the US for not doing enough in the WoT.¹³ This criticism peaked during President Donald Trump's tenure when he tweeted that Pakistan had offered

^{8.} Kux, Dennis. "The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies." Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

^{9.} Ali, Idrees, et al. "America's Longest War: 20 Years of Missteps in Afghanistan." Reuters, August 16, 2021. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/americas-longest-war-20-years-missteps-afghanistan-2021-08-16/.

^{10. &}quot;The U.S. War in Afghanistan Twenty Years on Public Opinion Then and Now." Council on Foreign Relations. July 17, 2024. https://www.cfr.org/blog/uswar-afghanistan-twenty-years-public-opinion-then-and-now.

^{11.} Obama, Barack. "President Obama on Inequality." Politico, December 4, 2013. https://www.politico.com/story/2013/12/obama-income-inequality-100662.

^{12. &}quot;Pakistan Won't Be a 'Scapegoat' in Afghan War, PM Abbasi Tells UN General Assembly." Dawn, September 22, 2017. https://www.dawn.com/news/1359305.

^{13.} Shepardson, David. "Trump Says U.S. Has Gotten 'Nothing' from Pakistan Aid." Reuters, January 3, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN-1EQ114/.

nothing but "lies and deceit" to the US.¹⁴ These accusations were damaging to Pakistan's global image and were not well received in Pakistan, which issued rebuttals in official statements.¹⁵ Following this, their relations deteriorated further as the US called off military assistance and collaborations with Pakistan.¹⁶ Parallel to these developments, the war in Afghanistan continued to intensify, with the American military and NATO facing increased international criticism for failing to achieve their intended goals in Afghanistan. The publication of the "Afghanistan Papers" by The Washington Post revealed major flaws in American policy and its approach to the Afghan conflict. These documents highlighted the pitfalls and missteps that had plagued the US efforts in Afghanistan, further complicating the geopolitical landscape and influencing Pakistan-US relations.¹⁷

The next phase involved the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. To achieve this, the US relied heavily on Pakistan, which was uniquely positioned as the most suitable and reliable partner due to its consistent engagement with the US throughout the conflict in Afghanistan. Pakistan played a pivotal role in facilitating the peace deal between the US and the Afghan Taliban, which was signed in 2021, leading to the eventual withdrawal of US troops.¹⁸ It is pru-

^{14.} Diamond, Jeremy. "Trump Slams Pakistan, Threatens to Cut Off Aid." CNN, January 1, 2018. https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/01/politics/donald-trump-2018-pakistan/index.html.

^{15. &}quot;Trump's 'Lies and Deceit' Tweet Deeply Hurt Every Pakistani, Bilawal Tells US Media," The Express Tribune, February 10, 2018, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1629563/trumps-lies-deceit-tweet-deeply-hurt-every-pakistani-bilawal-tells-us-media.

¹⁶. "Trump Admin Cancels \$300M Aid to Pakistan over Terror Record," NBC News, September 2, 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-admin-cancels-300m-aid-pakistan-over-terror-record-n905786.

^{17.} Whitlock, Craig. "The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War." Washington Post, December 9, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents/.

^{18.} Gul, Ayaz. "US Hails Pakistan's Role in Advancing Afghan Peace Process." VOA News, September 14, 2020. https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-

dent to recognize that Pakistan's engagement and support in this process were crucial.

Since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Washington has been increasingly engaged in a broader strategic competition with Beijing in the Asia-Pacific region, although this competition was ongoing even before the US withdrawal, it intensified significantly thereafter. This competition encompasses various domains, including economic influence, diplomatic efforts, technological competition (such as chip wars), military build-ups, and ideological influence. The US focus on China is likely to intensify, thus involving the global community extensively. Both the US and China are vying to expand their influence in the Asia-Pacific, making countries like Pakistan crucial in this geopolitical contest. In this era of US-China competition, the support of the Global South and regional powers is vital for the US to implement its policy choices effectively. Even if Pakistan does not play a direct role, it remains a significant player in the region due to its strategic position and regional influence.

The US' Bad Bet on India

The US strategy to contain China encompasses cross-regional and cross-industrial dimensions, making a new "great game" played on multiple fronts. One of the main areas of concern for the US is the Asia-Pacific region, where it seeks India's support against China. However, New Delhi finds it difficult to assert itself against China, both militarily and economically. Recent humiliations faced by India at Doklam and Aksai Chin highlight its vulnerabilities and lack of competency.²⁰ India continues to grapple with out-

asia_us-hails-pakistans-role-advancing-afghan-peace-process/6195885.html.

^{19.} Luce, Edward. "How America Can Win Over the Global South." Foreign Affairs, July/August 2023. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-america-can-win-over-global-south.

^{20.} Wuthnow, Joel, Satu Limaye, and Nilanthi Samaranayake. "Doklam, One Year Later: China's Long Game in the Himalayas." War on the Rocks, June 7, 2018.

dated military equipment, incompetent military personnel, an unstable economy, and growing religious intolerance at the domestic level. These domestic challenges hinder India's strategic ability to effectively manage internal affairs and project strength externally. The American urgency in containing China contrasts sharply with India's reluctance to commit to any future crisis vis-à-vis China. This divergence is a defining feature of Indo-US relations, complicating the strategic dynamics between the two states.²¹

In this context, the US finds it challenging to secure a reliable partner to contain China on its behalf. While India appears actively engaged in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and asserting itself in the Asia-Pacific region, its commitment remains largely limited to diplomatic statements only.²² Ashley Tellis in his latest article titled "America's Bad Bet on India," argues that the US should not expect India to align militarily against China in a conflict that does not directly threaten India's security. Tellis contends, "Washington's expectations of India are misplaced."23 India cannot significantly undermine China, both militarily and economically. Nevertheless, India provides the US with rhetorical support and, in return, receives substantial technological, economic, and military assistance, in the form of defense collaboration aimed at strengthening its military capabilities for potential military engagements in the region.

In essence, Tellis suggests that India-US collaboration often amounts to symbolic gestures from India without substan-

https://war on the rocks. com/2018/06/doklam-one-year-later-chinas-long-game-in-the-himal ayas/.

^{21.} Tellis. "America's Bad Bet on India."

^{22.} Miller, Manjari Chatterjee. "The Quad, AUKUS, and India's Dilemmas." Council on Foreign Relations, October 13, 2021. https://www.cfr.org/article/quad-aukus-and-indias-dilemmas.

^{23.} Tellis. "America's Bad Bet."

tial commitments. Despite its rhetoric and occasional alignment with US interests, India continues to maintain significant military ties with American rivals like Russia and pursues economic transactions, such as oil purchases from Iran, that contradict US sanctions policies. Despite these complexities, the US, eager to find allies in the Global South turns to counterbalance Chinese influence and overlooks India's engagements with Russia and Iran. This pragmatic approach allows the US to maintain the limited support it receives from India in its broader strategic efforts in South Asia and beyond.

Another point highlighting India's unreliability as a partner is the ongoing crises between Russia and the West since the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict, which has compelled other states to pick sides. India, despite its close strategic partnership with the US, did not align with the West, even though the US made efforts to persuade India to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and stop purchasing Russian oil. India has maintained a neutral stance on Ukraine while continuing to buy Russian oil, which has frustrated the US and led to portrayals of India as an unreliable partner.

In the context of China's competition, Indian stakeholders are aware that any confrontation with China would be devastating for India in terms of its economy and regional support, making India understandably cautious. India's current focus is primarily on enhancing its military-industrial ambitions with American support which is intensifying Pakistan's security dilemma. Whether these capabilities will be leveraged against China remains uncertain and will depend on future geopolitical developments.

Furthermore, India's recent rift with Canada over the killing of Canadian nationals has significantly tarnished its pres-

tige and global image.²⁴ This incident has strained India's relations with countries it has recently sought to align with. Statements from Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, followed by remarks from American officials regarding the planned killings on American and Canadian soil, have severely damaged India's international standing.²⁵ Indian External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar's recent visit to Russia, where he met with President Vladimir Putin,²⁶ signals India's annoyance against the criticism received from the Americans and Canadians. The visit to Moscow reflects innate anxiety on India's part, as it grapples with the complexities and pressures of its alliance with the US.

China's influence in South Asia

While China is garnering support across Asia, Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the US struggles to offer equally lucrative economic and financial deals, particularly to states in the Global South. In South Asia, where the US once wielded significant influence, its position appears to be diminishing as China emerges as the major patron of security, economic stability, and infrastructure development. This shifting geopolitical landscape presents challenges and opportunities for regional states as they navigate their roles and alliances in a rapidly evolving global order.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a massive investment in regional connectivity and infrastructure building that entails China's strategic goals in the South Asian region

^{24. &}quot;Canada Accuses India of Involvement in Sikh Activist's Murder." CBS News, September 18, 2023. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/canada-india-justin-trudeau-sikh-activists-murder-hardeep-singh-nijjar/.

^{25 .} Herman, Steve. "India Alleged to Have Plotted Assassination on US Soil." VOA News, November 22, 2023. https://www.voanews.com/a/india-alleged-to-have-plotted-assassination-on-us-soil/7365996.html.

^{26. &}quot;Russia Thanks India for Support on Ukraine, Criticizes West." Associated Press, January 1, 2023. https://apnews.com/article/russia-india-foreign-minister-ukraine-e39aabac4ca459cd11efac6b1027572a.

and beyond.²⁷ These goals, however, are subject to differing interpretations depending on the perspective. From the Chinese perspective, the BRI envisions a world with shared goals and shared destiny, aiming to enhance cooperation among states and nations. China promotes the initiative as a means to foster economic development, infrastructure growth, and mutual benefits, thereby creating a more interconnected and cooperative international environment. Conversely, the American view of China's BRI is markedly critical. The US asserts that the BRI initiative is a "potential debt trap" for smaller nations, wherein these countries become dependent on Chinese investment, making themselves vulnerable to economic and political exploitation by China.²⁸

Nonetheless, Chinese influence in the region is considerable, as China continues to expand its sphere of influence through economic diplomacy, rather than coercion. This approach has seen China forge strong relationships within countries including Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, and others. One of the most significant examples of this economic diplomacy is China's enormous investment in Pakistan's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). ²⁹ This economic corridor connects China's industrial zones with Gwardar, providing the shortest, most feasible, and secure gateway for China to access global markets. The relationship between Pakistan and China is exceptional. Both states share common strategic goals for regional stability and the balance of power, particularly about India.

^{27 .} Chatzky, Andrew, James McBride, and Noah Berman. "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative." Council on Foreign Relations, February 2, 2023. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative.

^{28. &}quot;China's Lending Practices Under Scrutiny as Developing Nations Struggle with Debt." Associated Press, February 21, 2023. https://apnews.com/article/china-debt-banking-loans-financial-developing-countries-collapse-8df6f9fa-c3e1e758d0e6d8d5dfbd3ed6.

^{29. &}quot;China and Pakistan Celebrate Anniversary of CPEC Project." Associated Press, July 31, 2023. https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-china-vice-premier-cpec-anniversary-f01295262a57f09c1d597f52b63d790c.

Moreover, key South Asian states like Maldives, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have seen growing and strengthening relations with China in recent years. These relatively small states have become wary of Indian ambitions and regional dealings. For instance, recent statements by Maldivian officials and public officeholders have caused diplomatic friction, causing hindrances to Indian ambitions and goals.³⁰

Additionally, Afghanistan, following the American withdrawal, remains a key concern for regional powers like Pakistan and China. Both states share common concern about the growing influence of terrorist organizations like Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Afghanistan. In contrast, the US seems to have distanced itself from taking responsibility for Afghanistan, a country that was under its military, strategic, and economic influence for over two decades.

Afghanistan's neighbors, especially Pakistan, have little choice but to address the challenges emanating from Afghanistan. China, recognizing its strategic interests, has become a key stakeholder in Afghanistan, engaging diplomatically to address critical issues between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China. By engaging with Afghanistan, China established itself as a major regional power committed to peace, stability, and economic opportunity. Nevertheless, meaningful economic cooperation with Afghanistan is contingent upon the Taliban government demonstrating inclusiveness and consistency in its governance.

From Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka; security, economy, and infrastructure

30. Samaranayake, Nilanthi. "As Tensions with India Grow, Maldives Looks to China." United States Institute of Peace, January 18, 2024. https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/01/tensions-india-grow-maldives-looks-china.

remain the top Chinese concern in the region. In this context, Pakistan emerges as a significant partner for China for several reasons.³¹ The CPEC is a flagship project under the BRI, signifying deep economic and infrastructural ties between the two states. Moreover, Pakistan's geographical position provides China with crucial access to the Arabian Sea, enhancing its trade routes and maritime presence. Additionally, the strong economic and diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan further underscore the strategic depth of their partnership.

China's investments in infrastructure projects across these countries aim to boost economic growth and serve to enhance regional stability, which is essential for maintaining secure trade routes and promoting sustainable development. As such, the strategic importance of Pakistan in China's regional calculus cannot be overstated, given its central role in China's infrastructure connectivity project.

Pakistan's Balancing Act

As Chinese and American interests in the region evolve, Pakistan finds itself in a world that is constantly changing. In this rapid evolution, the key to Pakistan's strategy and success lies in repositioning its strategic role. Pakistan's balancing act is based on adapting to the changing environment and circumstances. Its strategic goals focus on maintaining a safe environment and a stable neighborhood to pursue its broader objectives. Pakistan's definitive aim is to integrate itself into the regional economy, allowing its markets to flourish by realigning with states within and beyond the region. Pakistan's economic integration, however, is contingent upon regional security that has long been marred by protracted wars in Afghanistan, and hostility between Pakistan and India.

^{31 .} Andrew Small, "The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Countries do not evolve in isolation; they are products of their regional environments. Pakistan, in particular, faces a turbulent neighborhood. Situated next to Afghanistan, a country that has been embroiled in conflict for the last 40 years, Pakistan has suffered significant setbacks in its prospects for trade and development due to the wars and invasions in Afghanistan. Similarly, Pakistan's neighbor Iran has been under international sanctions for over 40 years, severely limiting the potential for trade and economic cooperation with a country struggling to integrate into the global economy. Consequently, these two key neighbors, despite their tremendous economic potential, fail to support Pakistan's vision for regional economic integration. Additionally, India remains an antagonistic neighbor, adopting an increasingly aggressive posture that undermines regional prospects for peace and stability. This challenging geopolitical environment necessitates strategic alliances, and China emerges as Pakistan's reliable partner.

China has consistently demonstrated extensive support for Pakistan, respecting its sovereignty and providing substantial economic investments when global alternatives were lacking. Despite this support, Pakistani policymakers do not rely on China to mitigate internal domestic, economic, and political crises. China's approach has been to encourage peaceful coexistence with India and cultivate friendly ties with the US, thereby creating room for Pakistan's economic growth. Beijing advocates for Pakistan to strike a delicate balance in its relations with both China and the US. This balance does not aim to achieve equality or maintain an identical distance; instead, it involves leveraging each relationship to serve Pakistan's national interests.³²

Against this backdrop, Pakistan needs to maintain its strategic patience. As a key ally of China, Pakistan can envi-

^{32.} Chaudhry, Aizaz Ahmad. "Delicate Balancing Act." Dawn, February 22, 2022. https://www.dawn.com/news/1676409.

sion a region that is economically integrated and secure. Additionally, Pakistan has a seven-decade-long strategic relationship with the US, where both countries have shared common ground in resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, fighting the WoT, and signing the American-Taliban Doha agreement. These instances have been crucial for US interests in the region, with Pakistan serving as the regional ally.

As global geopolitical events unravel, foreign policy thinkers in Pakistan and the US foreign policymakers need to broaden their strategic horizons and imagination for future collaborations. This will require innovation and creativity in foreign policy thinking in both Washington and Islamabad, to address existing issues and envision future scenarios.

Potential Areas for Pakistan-US Collaboration Shared Vision for Peace in Afghanistan

Following the withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan, the Taliban interim government has been subject to substantial criticism both domestically and internationally due to its restrictions on human rights, women's rights, and girls' access to education.³³ The Taliban appear to have learned little from the past two decades of conflict, maintaining their traditional stance on women and human rights. Furthermore, the deteriorating human rights situation, coupled with the Taliban's political exclusivity and marginalization of other political stakeholders,³⁴ significantly impedes Afghanistan's integration into the

^{33.} Ochab, Ewelina. "The Legacy of the Taliban: Poverty, Human Rights Violations, and Gender Apartheid." Forbes, August 14, 2023. https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2023/08/14/the-legacy-of-the-taliban-poverty-human-rights-violations-and-gender-apartheid/.

^{34.} Ibrahimi, Niamatullah. "The Taliban Need to Start an Intra-Afghan Dialogue, but with Who?" Al Jazeera, March 28, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/3/28/the-taliban-need-to-start-an-intra-afghan-dialogue-but-with-who.

broader international community.

Afghanistan is a land, characterized by a diverse political and cultural spectrum, where each ethnic and political group holds a unique place in society. These groups, individuals, and parties have been sidelined with the advent of the Taliban government. For Afghanistan to stabilize its relations with the global community, it is imperative to mainstream all stakeholders, thereby expanding public participation in government matters. Pakistan has played an instrumental role in facilitating dialogues among various Afghan groups on multiple occasions. 35 For Pakistan, peace and political stability in Afghanistan are prerequisites for its economic integration with central Asian states. Therefore, the sooner Afghanistan returns to a stable trajectory, the better it will be for Pakistan and the region. However, Pakistan cannot achieve this alone; it requires the support of other international players and stakeholders. Given the significant investment of the US in Afghanistan, it can play a crucial role in this process. The US has leverage with various Afghan political groups that can be utilized to foster inclusive governance. Additionally, other stakeholders, including China, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Central Asian states, can be brought together to address the Afghan issue comprehensively.

Supporting Regional Connectivity

Regional connectivity is a crucial area that requires deliberation between Pakistan and the US. In an increasingly interconnected world focused on shared energy needs and trade connectivity, the US needs to intensify its efforts to garner support from various regions. China, through its economic and trade strategies, is successfully expanding its influence by incorporating more countries into its sphere

^{35. &}quot;Afghan Leaders Begin Two-Day Peace Talks in Pakistan." Al Jazeera, June 22, 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/6/22/afghan-leaders-begin-two-day-peace-talks-in-pakistan.

of cooperation. Notable initiatives such as the BRI in Asia, the trans-railway projects in Central Asia,³⁶ energy cooperation with the Middle East³⁷ and various projects in Africa³⁸ are significantly enhancing China's leverage with regional powers. While China has been effectively cultivating its influence abroad, the US approach has been inward-looking, often becoming entangled in regional conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Iraq etc. This inward focus has diverted attention from broader strategic initiatives that could enhance regional connectivity and cooperation. For the US to maintain and expand its global influence, it needs to adopt a more rational approach to promoting regional connectivity and collaboration, particularly in areas like energy and trade where mutual interests with countries like Pakistan can be aligned.

With the rise of China, geopolitical dynamics have shifted significantly, leading to the formation of new alliances, the emergence of new political phenomena, and the evolution of innovative approaches to geopolitics at a rapid pace. For the US, it is crucial to create new alliances and strengthen partnerships with existing allies to prepare itself for future developments. In light of these changes, the US needs to promote increased cooperation with Pakistan in economic, technological, and connectivity corridors. The US may consider focusing on enhancing trade ties not only with Pakistan but also with the broader region.

^{36.} Donnellon-May, Genevieve, and Zhang Hongzhou. "Rail Link with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Key to China Raising Central Asia Influence and Skirting Russia Sanctions." Asia Society, August 29, 2023. https://asiasociety.org/australia/rail-link-kyrgyzstan-and-uzbekistan-key-china-raising-central-asia-influence-and-skirting-russia.

^{37. &}quot;China Signs 27-Year Gas Deal with Qatar Energy to Secure Supply." Al Jazeera, November 21, 2022. https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/11/21/china-signs-27-year-gas-deal-with-qatarenergy-to-secure-supply.

^{38.} Brautigam, Deborah. "China's Soft-Power Advantage in Africa." Foreign Affairs, December 23, 2021. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2021-12-23/chinas-soft-power-advantage-africa.

Enhancing Counterterrorism Mechanism

Pakistan and the US have been addressing the issue of counterterrorism for over two decades, a collaboration that intensified after the events of September 11, 2001. Following the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan became a crucial ally in the US-led WoT, providing support in intelligence, military operations, and regional stability efforts. Both countries have suffered from terrorism and its various manifestations globally, leading to a strong partnership focused on combating this threat. Terrorism remains the foremost concern for both states, in the region and worldwide.

Following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, Pakistan's security concerns have intensified. The number of terrorist attacks has risen, undermining regional security; approximately 1,000 Pakistanis were killed in terrorist attacks in 2023 alone. Given the US' four decades of direct and indirect involvement in Afghanistan, it should not leave the issue of terrorism unattended.³⁹ Pakistan requires support from the US to combat terrorist organizations that find refuge and safe havens in Afghanistan.⁴⁰ On multiple occasions, Pakistan has raised concerns about Indian involvement in financing and supporting terrorist organizations like the Pakistani Taliban, formally called the TTP.⁴¹ For a stable and continuous relationship with Pakistan, the US needs to acknowledge and address these regional security needs and requirements.

Should the US decide to initiate its defense and security mechanisms with Pakistan, it would not be approached

^{39 .} Gul, Ayaz. "Report: Terrorist Attacks Kill Nearly 1,000 Pakistanis in 2023." VOA News, December 31, 2023. https://www.voanews.com/a/report-terrorist-attacks-kill-nearly-1-000-pakistanis-in-2023-/7419344.html.

^{40 .} Shirazi, Iftikhar. "Army Expresses Serious Concerns on 'Safe Havens, Liberty of Action' Available to TTP in Afghanistan." Dawn, July 13, 2023. https://www.dawn.com/news/1764711.

^{41 .} Iqbal, Anwar. "Backed by 'Rival', TTP Free to Attack Pakistan, UN Told." Dawn, March 17, 2024. https://www.dawn.com/news/1799803.

from an entirely new perspective. Its involvement in Afghanistan, in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion and during the WoT, provides the US and Pakistan with a substantial foundation upon which to construct a shared security vision. This vision is crucial for curtailing and eliminating future terrorist threats. Therefore, the persistent terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan necessitate sustained US engagement with Pakistan. Moreover, given India's newfound relevance to the US in its policy of containing China, it would be imprudent for the US to sideline its relations with Pakistan and downplay Pakistan's security concerns. However, the recent downward trend in Pakistan-US relations has caused significant damage to their bilateral relationship, particularly at a time when strong cooperation is most needed.

Taming Indian Aggression

Countries do not progress in isolation; their development is intertwined with their regional surroundings. Pakistan's regional environment is particularly hostile due to India's military posture, its conventional and nuclear doctrines, and its hegemonic ambitions in the region and beyond. Due to India's provocative strategies, the security environment in South Asia remains fragile and tense, exacerbated by the rise of ultra-religious nationalism in India.⁴² Under the Modi government, tensions between India and Pakistan escalated significantly in the aftermath of the Pulwama incident, bringing the two countries to the brink of war.⁴³ Nonetheless, India appears to have miscalculated the changing regional dynamics by demonstrating increased aggression towards Pakistan, particularly through the alteration of the status of the occupied territory of Jammu and

^{42.} Gettleman, Jeffrey, and Suhasini Raj. "Modi's Policies Echo Trump's in India's Elections." New York Times, April 11, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/11/world/asia/modi-india-elections.html.

^{43 .} Khan, Iftikhar A. "Pulwama Attack Revelations Vindicate Pakistan: FO." Dawn, April 11, 2023. https://www.dawn.com/news/1748095.

Kashmir (IIOJK).44

India's aggression is likely to grow if it receives unrestrained support from the US, enabling its hostility in the region. To assist South Asia in achieving lasting peace, the US needs to balance its level of cooperation with regional players. If the US continues to pursue one-sided military, technological, intelligence, and trade deals with India, it will leave Pakistan and other regional countries with no option but to counter Indian aggression by strengthening their cooperation with China. Therefore, the US should address the issue of regional strategic balance with India and encourage restraint in its hostile posturing in favor of one against the other for the sake of larger regional peace.

Conclusion

The evolving dynamics of the South Asian region necessitate a renewed approach to Pakistan-US relations. Pakistan's strategic geographical position and its role within the region render it a significant ally for both China and the US. As a prominent regional state with distinct strengths and limitations, Pakistan possesses the capability and potential to strategically position itself in both regional and global contexts. To effectively leverage these capabilities and advance its regional and global aspirations, Pakistan should adopt innovative foreign policy strategies.

In international relations, states typically engage in cooperation based on self-interests. Therefore, the US and Pakistan should collaborate on shared interests in a rapidly evolving global landscape, aiming for mutual benefit. By realigning their strategic priorities and leveraging their respective strengths, both states can contribute significantly to regional stability and international peace.

^{44. &}quot;'Clear Threat': Kashmiris on India Top Court Upholding Removal of Autonomy." Al Jazeera, December 12, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/12/clear-threat-kashmiris-on-india-top-court-upholding-removal-of-autonomy.

Afghanistan, with two decades of American involvement, demands the attention of the US. The imminent issues in Afghanistan, like terrorism, women's rights, refugees, and connectivity, require regional cooperation to achieve lasting peace. Counter-terrorism remains paramount in Pakistan-US relations, requiring heightened cooperation and concerted efforts. Over 1000 Pakistanis have lost their lives in several attacks emanating from Afghanistan. This issue needs to be emphasized to the Afghan authorities and the international community.

India's persistent aggressive stance in the region is destabilizing South Asia's strategic equilibrium. The US should not allow India to pursue its unchecked ambitions, as seen in past incidents such as planning executions in Canada and the US. Any actions by India that infringe upon the sovereignty of neighboring states could jeopardize peace prospects in South Asia.

As competition between China and the US evolves, Pakistan has identified new avenues and opportunities that warrant exploration. This competition should not merely be viewed as a constraint for regional countries, but also as an opportunity to capitalize on new openings in the international arena. Pakistan and the US should prioritize strengthening their relations during these transformative times. By enhancing cooperation and understanding shared interests amidst global shifts, both states can promote greater stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

2

Artificial Intelligence led Lethal
Autonomous Weapon Systems and
Terrorism: Risk Assessment and Solutions
for Pakistan



Artificial Intelligence led Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems and Terrorism: Risk Assessment and Solutions for Pakistan

Ahmad Ibrahim¹ and Syeda Fizzah Shuja²

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is undergoing a paradigm shift in the contemporary world and has emerged as a transformative force with significant military applications. As the integration of AI into military systems expands, concerns about the potential risks associated with autonomous weapons have heightened, raising apprehensions about national security in the face of possible terrorist threats. This article examines the evolution of AI in a military context while focusing on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS). LAWS, robotic weapons, or killer robots are autonomous weapons capable of independently navigating and engaging selective targets. The lack of coherence within the international strategic community in defining autonomous systems has led to legislative complications in controlling or regulating these weapons. Moreover, the potential for non-state

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actors to exploit AI-driven weapon technologies, such as autonomous drones and unmanned ground vehicles, poses profound challenges for Pakistan's national security. In response to these challenges, this article explores potential and possible solutions, addressing the ethical, legal, and strategic dimensions of managing AI-led LAWS to ensure responsible use and prevent unauthorized access to these weapons by non-state actors.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, Drones, Terrorism, National Security.

Introduction

In 1956, during a conference at Dartmouth College, the initial understanding of artificial intelligence (AI) was expressed: "Every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it." It can also be referred to as the ability of a machine to learn from experience, adjust to new inputs, and perform human-like tasks." In brief, AI is the ability of computer systems to perform tasks often associated with human intelligence (HI). It leverages rapid, iterative, and intelligent algorithms to process substantial data automatically discerning new patterns. The machine learns by processing large volumes of data, assessing the successes and failures, and generating algorithms that help classify objects, thereby predicting certain behavioral pat-

³. Veisdal, Jorgan. "The Birthplace of AI – The 1956 Dartmouth Workshop." Cantor's Paradise, September 12, 2019. https://www.cantorsparadise.com/the-birthplace-of-ai-9ab7d4e5fb00?gi=95ea7d231c63.

^{4.} Duan, Yanqing, John Edwards, and Yogesh Dwivedi. "Artificial Intelligence for Decision Making in the Era of Big Data – Evolution, Challenges and Research Agenda." International Journal of Information Management 48 (October 2019): 63-71. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0268401219300581.

terns.5

This capacity holds significant potential across various facets of the contemporary world, including military applications. AI-based learning redefines the projection of combat forces on a battlefield. These AI-led weapon systems are increasingly getting smaller, more flexible, precise, intelligent, and robust. An Autonomous Weapon System (AWS) can choose and attack targets without needing additional input from a human operator once activated. Lethal firepower with AWS resulted in the creation of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS). As technology evolves, the weaponization of AWS and its use on the battlefield is becoming more popular.

In this context, the potential for non-state actors/ terrorists to exploit the possibility of the use of AI-driven weapon technologies, such as autonomous drones and unmanned ground vehicles, poses profound challenges to Pakistan's national security. In response to these challenges, this article explores potential and possible solutions, addressing the ethical, legal, and strategic dimensions of managing AI-led LAWS to ensure responsible use and prevent unauthorized access to these weapons by non-state actors.

Levels of Autonomy and OODA Loop

Intelligent machines capable of performing tasks by themselves without explicit human control are called autono-

^{5. &}quot;What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?" IBM - United States, June 3, 2020. https://www.ibm.com/cloud/learn/what-is-artificial-intelligence.

^{6.} Allen, Gregory C. "DOD is Updating its Decade-Old Autonomous Weapons Policy but Confusion Remains Widespread." Centre for International and Strategic Studies, June 6, 2022. https://www.csis.org/analysis/dod-updating-its-decade-old-autonomous-weapons-policy-confusion-remains-widespread.

^{7.} Masood, Maryyum, and Muhammad Ali Baig. "Potential Impact of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia." Margalla Papers 27, no. 2 (2023): 27-43. https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/173.

mous machines. The difference between automatic and autonomous weapon systems is often debated. Automatic systems follow pre-programmed instructions to carry out specific tasks, relying on static directives that necessitate human interaction for any adjustments in response to a changing environment. In contrast, autonomous systems are programmed to adapt to their environment dynamically, thus making crucial decisions without human intervention.⁸

The OODA loop (observe-orient-decide-act), a decision-making model was developed by Colonel John Boyd. In human-operated weapon systems, a human operator is responsible for executing these actions whereas in autonomous weapon systems, the human relinquishes control over certain aspects of the OODA loop. Depending on the nature of interaction with human controls in the OODA loop, autonomy can be categorized into three levels: human-in-the-loop (semi-autonomy), human-on-the-loop (supervised autonomy), and human-out-of-the-loop (full-autonomy). The extent of human participation in the OODA loop dictates the level of control humans exert over an AI-based system.

Human-in-the-loop is the semi-autonomous level in which machines conduct supplementary actions while command and control lie with humans. Human has the sole authority to make decisions depending upon the input provided by the machine. Human-on-the-Loop is the supervised autonomous level in which supplementary actions as well as decision making is undertaken by machines without

^{8.} Taylor, Stacy J. "Autonomy." Encyclopedia Britannica, June 20, 2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/autonomy.

^{9.} Beard, Jack. "Autonomous Weapons and Human Responsibilities." Georgetown Journal of International Law 45, no. 617 (2014): 14-56. https://www.academia.edu/67515752/Autonomous.

human input. However entire process takes place under the supervision of a human operator who can allow the machine to conduct operation autonomously, or he can override the entire operation depending upon the situation. 10 Human-out-of-the-loop is the fully autonomous level where machines execute operations independently without the intervention of human operators in any capacity.¹¹ The capability and correspondingly the risks, increase with the level of autonomy in the weapon system. In general, full-autonomous weapon systems are perceived as the riskiest systems due to the lack of human control and the threat of AI acting in an irresponsible and out-of-control manner. Malfunctioning, bugs, system failures, hacking, and unanticipated interaction with the environment can yield unintended consequences. Greater human control is widely believed to be the solution for the mitigation of the aforementioned risks.

However, this generalization is valid when professional security forces are taken into account. The human operator in such cases is bound by the legal framework and is trained to act by standard operating procedures (SOPs) to attain maximum benefit with minimum risks. But the situation changes drastically when a human operator belonging to a terrorist organization is put into the equation. Such hostile actors rely on all means possible to inflict the utmost damage to civilian as well as military targets without worrying about ethical or legal obligations. This makes integration of lethal weapons with all levels of autonomy, no matter in what capacity human is involved, extremely dangerous and hard to counter.

^{10.} Saylor, Kelly M. "Defense Primer: US Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems." US Congressional Research Service, 2022. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11150.

^{11 .} Saylor, Defense Primer.

Understanding LAWS

Contemporarily, there is no mutually agreed and globally agreed definition of an autonomous weapon system. 12 China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) perceives LAWS as "a weapon that utilizes AI to automatically pursue, distinguish, and destroy enemy targets; often composed of information collection and management systems, knowledge base systems, assistance to decision systems, mission implementation systems, etc."13 Russian Ministry of Defense has defined these systems as "an unmanned piece of technical equipment that is not a munition and is designed to perform military and support tasks under remote control by an operator, autonomously or using the combination of these methods." 14 According to NATO, an autonomous system is "a system that decides and acts to accomplish desired goals, within defined parameters, based on acquired knowledge and an evolving situational awareness, following an optimal but potentially unpredictable course of action."15 From the UK Ministry of Defence's perspective, "An autonomous system is capable of understanding higher-level intent and direction." From this understanding and its perception of environment, such a system can take appropriate action to bring about a desired state. It is capable of deciding a course of action, from several alternatives, without depending on human oversight and

 $^{12\,.}$ Motoyama, Sono. "Inside the United Nations Effort to Regulate Autonomous Killer Drones." The Verge, August 27, 2018. https://www.theverge.com/2018/8/27/17786080/united-nations-un-autonomous-killer-robots-regulation-conference.

^{13.} Kania, Elsa B. "China's Embrace of AI: Enthusiasm and Challenges." European Council on Foreign Relations, November 6, 2018. https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_chinas_embrace_of_ai_enthusiasm_and_challenges/.

^{14.} Sagarmsingh, Raine. "Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems: Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy." *Journal of IEEE* 12, no. 12 (2019): 12. http://sixhalfdev.com/projects/wp-wise/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Raine_S_-FinalPaper.pdf_

^{15. &}quot;AAP-06 Edition 2020: NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions." NATO Standardization Office, 2020. https://www.nato.int/docu/logi-en/1997/lo-1709. htm.

control, although these may still be present. Although the overall activity of an autonomous unmanned aircraft will be predictable, individual actions may not.¹⁶

The US Department of Defense (US DoD) refers to LAWS as "a weapon system that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator. This includes human-supervised autonomous weapon systems that are designed to allow human operators to override operation of the weapon system but can select and engage targets without further human input after activation."¹⁷

Building mutual consensus regarding the definition of LAWS is a major challenge due to the vast disparity in comprehending their technical functionalities and subsequent military applications. In brief, three different groups of thought exist i.e., pessimists, optimists, and realists. Pessimists¹⁸ perceive LAWS as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that are destabilizing in nature and contradict ethical and legal values. The optimists¹⁹ appreciate the capabilities provided by LAWS and support their further development. Realists²⁰ have a more balanced point of view

^{16. &}quot;Unmanned Aircraft Systems (JDP 0–30.2)." Ministry of Defence-Gov UK, 2018. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unmanned-aircraft-systems-jdp-0-302.

^{17.} Garamone, Jim. "DoD Directive 3000.09 on Autonomy in Weapon Systems." US Department of Defense, January 25, 2023. https://www.esd.whs.mil/portals/54/documents/dd/issuances/dodd/300009p.pdf.

^{18. &}quot;Banning Autonomous Weapons: A Legal and Ethical Mandate." Ethics & International Affairs, July 1, 2022. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ethics-and-international-affairs/article/banning-autonomous-weapons-a-legal-and-ethical-mandate/AFD89F8B51D6C0FA2A8A6568EF0BFF35.

¹⁹. Air University. "Laws on LAWS: Regulating the Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems." Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs. July 17, 2023. https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/ArticleID/1048/laws-on-laws-regulating-the-lethal-autonomous-weapon-systems.

^{20.} Air University. "Laws on LAWS: Regulating the Lethal Autonomous Weapon

related to LAWS as they believe that technological developments of LAWS cannot be capped, and a complete ban is not possible. These three different groups of thought are representations of different countries' positions at the international level and are yet to find a common ground for defining and legislating LAWS. Therefore, the world's leading states should formulate a regulatory mechanism to keep the development and deployment of such systems in check.²¹

Evolution of Autonomy in Unmanned Weapon Systems

Human-operated unmanned systems have been in use in varying capacities since World War I (WWI).²² The work for the incorporation of autonomy in military systems began during the Cold War. In 1963, US\$2 million in funds were granted to MIT by the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to research "machine-added cognition" to develop new military applications for achieving technological advantage against the Soviet Union.²³ The evolution of autonomy in unmanned systems can be split into three phases.

The first phase is characterized by remote-controlled systems, which rely on human input to execute every task. During the Cold War, several such unmanned aerial sys-

Systems."

^{21 .} Noor, Sitara. "Laws on LAWS: Regulating the Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems." Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, September 21, 2023. https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3533453/laws-on-laws-regulating-the-lethal-autonomous-weapon-systems/.

^{22.} Canan, James W. "On the Horizon: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles." Air & Space Forces Magazine, October 1, 1988. https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/1088uav/.

^{23 .} Van Atta, Richard H. "DARPA Technical Accomplishments: An Historical Overview of Selected DARPA Projects." Internet Archives, no. 2 (1991): 83. https://archive.org/details/DARPATechnicalAccomplishmentsandHistoricalReviewofSelectedDARPAProjectsVolume1.

tems were developed, even employed, primarily for reconnaissance purposes. But these systems were completely void of autonomy of their own. For example, the US MQ-1 Predator Drone, developed in the late 20th century, was remotely piloted and used chiefly for surveillance and reconnaissance roles. Later versions of these drones were capable of following pre-programmed flight paths, executing basic maneuvers, and conducting sustained surveillance independent of human control. In this phase, unmanned systems began to weaponize with precision munitions. However, humans were still in control of making final decisions and completing complex tasks according to evolving situations.²⁴

Post 2010 marks the second phase of autonomy integration in unmanned systems. Integration of higher grades of semi-autonomy allowed unmanned systems to adapt according to dynamic combat environments by identifying the changing conditions, crafting feasible solutions, and making rapid decisions with minimum human input. Drones acquired more autonomy in navigation, target recognition, and flight operations. The engagement capability, however, remained under human control. Northrop Grumman X-47B, an unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV), took off and landed on an aircraft carrier after executing in-flight maneuvers on May 14, 2013. Similarly, the Boeing MQ-25 Stingray became the first carrier-based tanker drone, which could perform the complex task of inflight-refueling autonomously. 26

^{24.} Hoehn, John R., Kelley M. Sayler, and Michael E. DeVine. "Unmanned Aerial Systems: Role, Missions, and Future Concepts." US Congressional Research Service, July 18, 2022. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47188.

^{25 .} Subbharaman, Nidhi. "X-47B Drone Completes First Ever Carrier Takeoff and Landing." NBC News, May 15, 2013. https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/navys-x-47b-drone-completes-first-carrier-takeoff-flna1c9922371.

^{26.} Newdick, Thomas. "Navy's MQ-25 Stingray Tanker Drone Goes Aboard a Carrier for the First Time." The War Zone, December 2, 2021. https://www.

The third and most contemporary phase involves the development and employment of military systems with supervised autonomy. Many such systems have been equipped with weapons or have been integrated with warheads - like in the case of loitering munitions or Kamikaze drone boats, essentially transforming them into LAWS. Loitering munitions, also called Kamikaze or suicide drones, represent a unique weapon category that combines the characteristics of both drones and missiles.²⁷

These munitions possess the capability to detect and track targets over an extended duration before initiating engagement. Although human input during operational use varies depending on the threat environment and type of weapon being used, loitering munitions have a high degree of autonomy in comparison to traditional combat drones. In some instances, these munitions can autonomously search, identify, decide, and engage targets without any human intervention.²⁸ Examples include Israel's Harpy, the US's Switch Blade, Turkey's Kargu-II, Russia's Aero-Kub, and Iran's Shahed-136.

In full-scale conflict, Kamikaze drones were first used by Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan's military effectively used loitering munitions to precisely engage the Armenian military, particularly air defense systems, from stand-off ranges.²⁹ Similarly, during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, both sides have extensively used weapons with great effect. These suicidal drones have proven their effectiveness against military as well as

the drive.com/the-war-zone/43361/navys-mq-25-sting ray-tanker-drone-goesaboard-a-carrier-for-the-first-time.

^{27.} Scharre, Paul. Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018, 53.

^{28.} Ibrahim, Ahmad. "Loitering Munitions as a New-Age Weapon Systems." CSCR, December 5, 2022. https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/loitering-munitions-as-a-new-age-weapon-system/.

^{29.} Ibrahim, "Loitering Munitions."

civilian targets. The traditional air defense systems have repeatedly been overwhelmed by these munitions, particularly during saturated strikes. ³⁰

In the maritime domain, Ukraine has successfully employed Kamikaze drone boats to attack the Russian Navy Black Sea Fleet. Despite overwhelming naval superiority, the Russian Navy has been unable to impose a complete blockade of the Ukrainian coast. Ukraine has been using suicidal boats with high-grade autonomy as a sea-denial weapon against the Russian surface fleet. These pilot-less explosive-laden boats have been used to target warships at sea as well as harbor. Allegedly, the well-protected Crimean Bridge was also attacked by an unmanned suicidal boat, which managed to breach multiple layers of Russian defenses. These cheap suicide drone boats have degraded the Russian Navy's ability to operate independently in the Black Sea.

Besides the proliferation of loitering munitions and Kamikaze drone boats, many nations are also in the advanced stages of developing drone-swarm technology with an enhanced level of autonomy. These autonomous swarms of drones, once weaponized, will offer vast military applications along with equivalent levels of risk.³³ As the level of autonomy evolves, the next generations of AWS will eventually enter the battlefields of the future.

^{30.} Kahn, Lauren. "Can Iranian Drones Turn Russia's Fortunes in the Ukraine War?" Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2022. https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/can-iranian-drones-turn-russias-fortunes-ukraine-war.

^{31 .} Zafra, Mariano, and Jon McClue. "Sea Drones and Counteroffensive in Crimea." Reuters, July 17, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/graphics/UKRAINE-CRISIS/CRIMEA/gdvzwrmrlpw/.

^{32.} Walsh, Nick P. "The Moment Ukraine Used Experimental Sea Drone to Target Russian Bridge." CNN, August 15, 2023. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/08/15/europe/ukraine-crimea-bridge-drone-strike-video-intl/index.html.

^{33 .} Hambling, David. "Israel Rolls out Legion-X Drone Swarm for the Urban Battlefield." Forbes, October 24, 2022. https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhambling/2022/10/24/israel-rolls-out-legion-x-drone-swarm.

LAWS as Weapons of Terror

The likelihood of terrorists using LAWS depends on the motivation and realistic accessibility of such technology. Numerous factors contribute to the attractiveness of LAWS for terrorists. First, AI-enabled weapons could minimize, if not eliminate, the physical risks associated with terrorist action. Second, fully AWS holds the potential to be invulnerable to countermeasures such as jamming or interception, thus, increasing the rate of success. Thirdly, LAWS offers force multiplication as unlike manual systems that require continuous intervention, those deploying AWS can potentially operate multiple LAWS simultaneously. In sum, AI can potentially act as an enabling technology for terrorism.³⁴

When accessibility of such high-end technology to terrorist factions is taken into account, there are three primary obstacles. First, the availability of unmanned systems that can act as carriers; second, the incorporation of sufficiently advanced AI so that the weapon system could undertake tasks autonomously without failure; and third, the ability to integrate a warhead with an unmanned system that can detonate as intended and deliver desired damage. Nonstate actors now possess the capability to deploy homemade, remotely piloted drones and weapons capable of autonomously navigating to designated targets and delivering explosive payloads.

Militant organizations have been using manually controlled suicide drones for the past several years. According to an open-source study, 440 terror incidents involving weaponized drones have been recorded between August

 $^{34\,.}$ Horowitz, Michael. "Artificial Intelligence, International Competition, and the Balance of Power." Texas National Security Review 3 (May 2018): 37. https://tnsr.org/2018/05/artificial-intelligence-international-competition-and-the-balance-of-power/.

2016 and March 2020.35 Almost the entirety of these attacks (433 out of 440) took place in the Middle East and North Africa.³⁶ The use of commercial-grade quad-copters for dropping mortars and grenades was first popularized by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2017 during the war against Iraqi security forces.³⁷ These drones caught Iraqi and US forces by surprise and inflicted losses to infantry, artillery, and even armored forces. According to a US special ops commander, the usage of "killer bees" in Mosel degraded morale and gave the enemy a tactical advantage through commercial-grade drones.³⁸ On Jan 2018, ISIS attacked Russian forces in Hmeimim Airbase with several suicide drones. These drones were wrapped with homemade mines and were thwarted by Russian defenses.39 This was the first instance when an attack of this magnitude was launched by a terrorist outfit against a military.

Fully autonomous suicidal drones represent the next logical step in drone evolution. These drones can also be armed with weapons and will be able to effectively evade traditional defensive systems. Moreover, such systems will be able to identify and strike targets based on visual cues or track individuals using facial or gait recognition. Commercial Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), including First

^{35.} Haugstved, Håvard, and Jan Otto Jacobsen. "Taking Fourth-Generation Warfare to the Skies? An Empirical Exploration of Non-State Actors' Use of Weaponized Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs — 'Drones')." Perspectives on Terrorism 14, no. 5 (October 2020): 30. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26940037.

^{36.} Haugstved and Jacobsen. "Taking Fourth-Generation Warfare to the Skies?"

^{37.} Warrick, Joby. "Use of Weaponized Drones by ISIS Spurs Terrorism Fears." Washington Post, February 21, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/use-of-weaponized-drones-by-isis-spurs-terrorism-fears/2017/02/21/9d83d51e-f382-11e6-8d72-263470bf0401_story.html.

^{38.} Layton, Peter. "Commercial Drones: Privatising Air Power." The Lowy Institute, September 27, 2017. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/commercial-drones-privitising-air-power.

^{39. &}quot;Russia Thwarts Drone Attack on Hmeimim Airbase." BBC News, January 7, 2018. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42595184.

Person View (FPV) drones, with their ability to navigate through complex obstacles and target specific individuals, already exhibit this capability due to integrated high-grade autonomy. Besides suicidal attacks for inflicting high losses, AI can also transform specialized tasks, such as sniping, into more routine and less specialized activities. AI-powered suicidal drones can be used to target-kill specific individuals in crowds by terrorist factions. For example, the assassination attempt on Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's residence in November 2021 was made by a booby-trapped drone.

According to a UN report, the first instance of an AI-powered suicidal drone was recorded in March 2020 in Libya when a Turkish-origin Kargu-II suicidal quad-copter was used to target the Libyan National Army (LNA).⁴³ The report further stated that "The lethal autonomous weapon systems were programmed to attack targets without requiring data connectivity between the operator and the munition: in effect, a true 'fire, forget and find' capability."⁴⁴ The proliferation of loitering munitions and their widespread use in the Russia-Ukraine war indicates that these highly capable munitions will eventually fall into the hands of non-state actors. Once employed, these suicidal autonomous munitions, due to their ability to exploit vul-

^{40.} Brundage, Miles. The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence: Forecasting, Prevention, and Mitigation. Oxford, U.K.: Future of Humanity Institute, University of Oxford, February 2018, 27.

^{41 .} Brundage, The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence, 21.

^{42.} Adnan, Ghassan, and Jared Malsin. "Iraq's Prime Minister Targeted in Assassination Attempt." The Wall Street Journal, November 7, 2021. https://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqs-prime-minister-survives-assassination-attempt-government-says-11636248485.

^{43.} UNSC. Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Under Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011). Relief Web, 2021. https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/final-report-panel-experts-libya-established-pursuant-resolution-1973-2011-s2017466.

^{44.} UNSC Final report of the Panel of Experts on Libya, 17.

nerabilities in defenses, will pose a major challenge to the security of civilian as well as military infrastructure. Similarly, terrorist organizations might also explore the repurposing of commercially available drones, modifying them to carry improvised lethal payloads. While not true autonomous weapons, these modified drones could be used in autonomous or semi-autonomous modes for carrying out attacks.

Besides the use of AI-powered suicidal quad-copters or even loitering mentions, there are a few more potential forms of LAWS that can be exploited for terrorist purposes. Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED), or simple car bomb, has been a weapon of choice for terror outfits for large-scale destruction. In concept, an explosive-laden vehicle is driven by a suicide driver who detonates the vehicle after reaching the destined target. But the convergence of AI with VBIED can potentially create an unmanned suicide vehicle that can operate semi-autonomously or even autonomously and wreak havoc against congested or high-value targets.45 Although this level of technology is currently beyond the grasp of non-state actors considering the wide adaptation of commercial technology of driverless vehicles (Tesla cars for example), the risk of militarization and eventually terrorization of this technology is very real.

In the maritime domain, militant factions have used man-driven explosive boats for suicide attacks against surface ships. On October 12, 2000, an explosive-laden boat driven by two Al-Qaeda suicide bombers hit United States Navy (USN) destroyer USS Cole, killing 17 sailors and in-

^{45 .} Lewis, Jeffery W. "Smart Bomb in Every Garage – Driverless Cars and Future Terrorist Attacks." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, September 18, 2015. https://www.start.umd.edu/news/smart-bomb-every-garage-driverless-cars-and-future-terrorist-attacks.

juring 39 others. ⁴⁶ Similarly, in 2016, Royal Saudi Navy Frigate Al-Madinah was struck by a Yemeni Houthi's remotely controlled suicide boat killing two sailors and wounding three more. The attack took place in the Southern Red Sea and was the first incident in modern history involving a successful attack of a remote-operated suicide boat against a warship.

In the Russia-Ukraine war, Kamikaze boats with a higher degree of autonomy are being used extensively to target Russian Warships and naval infrastructure in the Black Sea.⁴⁷ The potential risk of employing Kamikaze drone boats incorporated with AI by terrorists poses a major threat to maritime security. These boats would be a grave threat near shores or at choke points. Not only merchant vessels, but even warships will be vulnerable to this new potential threat, thus necessitating countermeasures.48 Likewise, underwater drones equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) and armed with explosives have been used by Hamas to target Israel's maritime infrastructure. Although the Israeli Navy countered these underwater suicide drones. Israel was forced to deactivate a natural gas rig chiefly due to the threat of these drones. 49 Recently, the Houthi militia in Yemen has employed rudimentary unmanned suicide boats to target merchant vessels in the Red

^{46. &}quot;USS Cole Bombing Fast Facts." CNN, November 22, 2022. https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/18/world/meast/uss-cole-bombing-fast-facts/index.html.

^{47. &}quot;Unmanned Kamikaze Boats Have Become a Real Ukrainian Weapon of Deterrence." Defence Express, August 24, 2023. https://en.defence-ua.com/news/unmanned_kamikaze_boats_have_become_a_real_ukrainian_weapon_of_deterrence-7731.html.

^{48.} Ibrahim, Ahmad. "Feasibility of Kamikaze Drone Boats in Modern Warfare." CSCR, July 27, 2023. https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/feasibility-of-kamikaze-drone-boats-in-modern-warfare/#:~:text=First%2C%20these%20 boats%20can%20be,denial%20envelop%20in%20territorial%20waters.

^{49 .} Gross, Judah Ari. "IDF Says It Thwarted Underwater Drone Attack by Hamas from Northern Gaza." Times of Israel, May 18, 2021. https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-it-thwarted-underwater-drone-attack-by-hamas-from-northern-gaza/.

Sea. The US Navy warships, deployed in the Red Sea under the aegis of Operation Prosperity Guardian, have intercepted numerous suicide drone boats launched by Houthis. Besides surface drones, Houthis have also introduced unmanned underwater vehicles equipped with explosive payloads, to target merchant ships and naval vessels in the Red Sea. The growing complex scale of drone systems deployed by a non-state actor in the maritime domain suggests that as newer technologies become widespread, more capable systems with superior autonomy will also be used by such factions for hostile ambitions.

Perhaps the most concerning form of AI-driven weapon systems is drone swarms, where multiple drones adapt and learn to perform tasks with mutual collaboration.⁵² The real peril lies in large swarms of weaponized drones capable of inflicting tens of thousands of casualties.⁵³ Machine learning algorithms enable a swarm of drones to navigate confined spaces by providing each other with information about their surroundings thus enabling them to learn not only their presence but also the movements of other drones within the swarm.⁵⁴ Aerobatic displays fea-

^{50. &}quot;US Forces Destroy Two Houthi Suicide Drone Boats." The Maritime Executive, February 2, 2024. https://maritime-executive.com/article/u-s-forces-destroy-two-more-houthi-suicide-drone-boats.

^{51.} Millward, David. "Houthis Deploy Drone Submarine for First Time." The Telegraph, February 18, 2024. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/worldnews/2024/02/18/red-sea-houthis-deploy-drone-submarine-shipping-mid-dle-east/#:~:text=Houthi%20rebels%20have%20deployed%20a,CENTCOM)%20 said%20in%20a%20statement.

^{52.} Hambling, David. "What Are Drone Swarms and Why Does Everyone Suddenly Want One?" Forbes, March 1, 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhambling/2021/03/01/what-are-drone-swarms-and-why-does-everyone-suddenly-want-one/?sh=7ab4cef52f5c.

^{53.} Kallenborn, Zachary, and Philipp C. Bleek. "Drones of Mass Destruction." War on Rocks, February 14, 2019. https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/drones-of-mass-destruction-drone-swarms-and-the-future-of-nuclear-chemical-and-biological-weapons/.

^{54.} Fingas, J. "AI Helps Drone Swarms Navigate through Crowded, Unfamiliar

turing hundreds of centrally controlled UAVs are becoming commonplace, and advancements in technology might enable fully autonomous UAVs in compact sizes. Consequently, terror entities assembling vast numbers of small autonomous weapons could create WMDs. However, the technical complexities of creating a successful autonomous swarm currently limit their development to military actors.

In recent years, non-state actors have demonstrated a propensity for innovative adoption of new technologies including AI. The widespread use of loitering munitions by the Wagner group in the Russia-Ukraine war indicates that several states in the future would be prone to providing or leaking sensitive LAWS tech to non-state actors.

As technology commercializes and dual-use technologies become commonly available, the prospects of terrorization of AI in general and LAWS in particular increase substantially. There is a growing need to formulate legislation to cap the proliferation of such technologies so that easy access to hostile actors may be denied. Given the formidable technical challenges associated with developing a functional autonomous weapons system, however, immediate apprehension about terrorist utilization of AWS may be unwarranted.

Legislation Issues Regarding LAWS

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), also known as the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), is designed to oversee armed conflicts and offers mechanisms to safeguard fundamental human rights during violence.⁵⁵ The key feature

Spaces." Engadget, July 18, 2020. https://www.engadget.com/caltech-drone-swarm-ai-174642584.html.

^{55. &}quot;What is International Humanitarian Law." ICRC, July 27, 2004. https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf.

of IHL is the principle of distinction, which requires parties involved in armed conflict to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants and ensures the latter's immunity from being targeted. LAWS, being "human-less" in nature, have questionable credibility in this regard.

Legislation about LAWS is inherently difficult. The challenges stem from the fundamental complications in defining, predicting, and controlling the effects of these weapons. The majority of international agreements that exist to prohibit or regulate certain weapons were established before the emergence of the technology associated with AWS and LAWS.⁵⁶ Consequently, the rapid advancement of technology is outpacing the boundaries set by IHL, creating a situation where IHL struggles to keep pace with the evolving landscape of the militarization of AI.

Two expert meetings have been hosted by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), while the United Nations, operating under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), has arranged three informal expert meetings to evaluate the technological, military, ethical, and legal aspects of LAWS.⁵⁷ As a result of these meetings, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) established a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) in 2016. The inaugural meeting of this group, held in November 2017, saw participation from 86 countries, over 60 civil society organizations, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and ICRC.⁵⁸ The primary objective was to explore legal arguments op-

^{56.} Jha, U. C. Killer Robots: Legal Autonomous Weapons Systems, Legal, Ethical and Moral Challenges. Delhi: Vij Publishers, 2016, 59.

^{57.} Noor. "Laws on LAWS."

^{58. &}quot;Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, Support Grows for New International Law on Killer Robots." Stop Killer Robots, November 17, 2017. https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/?p=6579.

posing the development, production, and employment of AWS. However, the summit faced a roadblock in the very initial phase due to disagreement on a precise definition of AWS. This obstacle, emanating primarily due to objections from major powers, undermined the prospects of making further progress on the issue.

Since 2018, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has consistently declared his stance that LAWS are both politically unacceptable and morally repugnant and should be prohibited under international law. In his 2023 New Agenda for Peace, Guterres reiterated this position, urging states to establish a legally binding instrument by 2026 to prohibit lethal systems that operate without human control and cannot adhere to international humanitarian law. He emphasized the absence of specific multilateral regulations, highlighting that the design, development, and use of such systems raise serious humanitarian, legal, security, and ethical concerns. These concerns, he noted, constitute a direct threat to human rights and fundamental freedom.⁵⁹

Several arms control advocates have persuaded the international community to impose a complete ban on the development and deployment of LAWS through a UN-sanctioned international treaty. Human rights organizations like Campaign to Stop Killer Robots call for banning all types of autonomous weapons. Human Rights Watch also advocates for a pre-emptive ban on the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapon systems.⁶⁰

^{59. &}quot;Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)." United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2023. https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons/background-on-laws-in-the-ccw/.

^{60. &}quot;Killer Robots." Human Rights Watch, 2010. https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms/killer-robots#:~:text=Human%20Rights%20Watch%20calls%20for,Campaign%20to%20Stop%20Killer%20Robots.

The ICRC has recommended banning unpredictable autonomous weapons because of their indiscriminate effects. Since 2013, 30 nations have endorsed a complete ban on LAWS. Even prominent tech figures, including Elon Musk and Bill Gates, have also suggested banning "killer robots."

However, it has been observed that nations at the fore-front of the development of AI-based weapons, including LAWS, resist calls for their prohibition. According to them, a complete ban on LAWS is near-impossible primarily due to the following reasons: a) the difficulty in the categorization of LAWS; b) the military advantages associated with LAWS; and c) the prospect of using commercial-grade technology for developing LAWS. Great powers oppose banning initiatives being counter-productive and potentially outlawing positive applications of militarized AI. These powers have also resisted the new arms control regime by arguing that existing international law is sufficient to cover autonomous weapons. Furthermore,

^{61. &}quot;ICRC Position on Autonomous Weapon Systems." ICRC, May 11, 2021. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-position-autonomous-weapon-systems.

^{62.} Stauffer, Brian. "Stopping Killer Robots." Human Rights Watch, August 10, 2022. https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/10/stopping-killer-robots/country-positions-banning-fully-autonomous-weapons-and#_ftn12.

^{63.} Clifford, Catherine. "Hundreds of A.I. Experts Echo Elon Musk, Stephen Hawking in Call for a Ban on Killer Robots." CNBC, November 8, 2017. https://www.cnbc.com/2017/11/08/ai-experts-join-elon-musk-stephen-hawking-call-for-killer-robot-ban.html.

^{64.} Trager, Robert F. "Killer Robots Are Here – and We Need to Regulate Them." Foreign Policy, May 11, 2022. https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/11/killer-robots-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems-ukraine-libya-reg.

^{65.} Brzozowski, Alexandra. "No Progress in UN Talks on Regulating Lethal Autonomous Weapons." Euractiv, November 22, 2019. https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/no-progress-in-un-talks-on-regulating-lethal-autonomous-weapons.

⁶⁶. "US Statement at the GGE on LAWS During the Discussion on Agenda Item 5(D)." US Mission Geneva, August 5, 2021. https://geneva.usmission.gov/2021/08/05/u-s-statement-at-the-gge-on-laws-during-the-discussion-of-agendaitem-5d/.

a complete ban will potentially undermine the efforts for developing counter systems against LAWS.

The US asserts that existing international humanitarian laws are adequate, with its policy allowing for human intervention in the use of force decisions. ⁶⁷ China's stance is ambiguous, supporting research and development in LAWS but opposing their deployment in combat. China also insists on defining LAWS more precisely. ⁶⁸ Russia has also opposed moves to ban killer robots. ⁶⁹ The United Kingdom initially endorsed the importance of human control over weapons but later opposed a pre-emptive ban, emphasizing the importance of technological advancements. ⁷⁰

Germany advocates for maintaining meaningful human control over the decision to kill other humans and has called for banning these weapons. However, Berlin has not supported proposals to launch treaty negotiations.⁷¹ France neither possesses nor intends to acquire AWS but believes that it's legitimate and vital to continue research in the area of autonomy in weapon systems.⁷²

^{67. &}quot;Defense Primer: US Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems." US Congressional Research Service, 2023. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11150.

^{68.} Kania, Elsa. "China's Strategic Ambiguity and Shifting Approach to Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems." Lawfare, April 17, 2018. https://www.lawfare-media.org/article/chinas-strategic-ambiguity-and-shifting-approach-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems.

^{69. &}quot;Russia Blocks Move on Ban of Killer Robots." Arms Control Association. July 17, 2023. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-01/news-briefs/russia-blocks-move-killer-robots-ban.

^{70.} Saufer, Brian. "Stopping Killer Robots: Country Positions on Banning Fully Autonomous Weapons and Retaining Human Control." Human Rights Watch, August 10, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/10/stopping-killer-robots/country-positions-banning-fully-autonomous-weapons-and#_ftn3.

⁷¹. Brian. "Stopping Killer Robots: Country Positions on Banning Fully Autonomous Weapons."

^{72.} Brian, "Stopping Killer Robots."

Israel asks for an open-minded approach regarding the capabilities of LAWS and even believes that these weapons even ensure better compliance with IHL in the future.⁷³ The variability in argumentation suggests that technologically advanced nations pre-dominantly view these weapons as effective tools of warfare and means to achieve military superiority over their adversaries while undermining the risks associated with the misuse of these weapons.

A more targeted approach, as suggested by the European Union Commission, would be to ban the unacceptable use of AI. The unacceptable uses of AI are those that are "considered a clear threat to the safety, livelihoods, and rights of people." This approach, despite being more focused, is still vague and thus unlikely to succeed.⁷⁴

A further complication arises from the competitive nature of global politics. The intensifying security dilemma between global powers, particularly the US and China has triggered an arms race to develop and weaponize emerging technologies. Additionally, the nonproliferation regimes are being bypassed and previously agreed-upon treaties are gradually collapsing. Establishing an environment conducive to constructive dialogue among states for discussions on the prohibition, control, or regulation of the development of LAWS proves to be a formidable task.

A middle-ground suggestion may seek to find a balance between acknowledging the potential risks posed by autonomous systems and recognizing their capacity to mitigate the limitations of traditional weapon systems. Absolute prohibitions are not only impractical but may also

^{73. &}quot;Stopping Killer Robots."

^{74. &}quot;EU Artificial Intelligence Rules will Ban 'Unacceptable' Use." BBC News, April 21, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-56830779.

inadvertently eliminate technological advancements that have the potential to reduce collateral damage in military operations. To nullify this risk, it would be prudent for governments to undertake tiered-based arms-control and anti-proliferation measures.⁷⁵ To prevent non-state actors from directly or indirectly accessing weaponized AI technology.

Use of LAWS for Terrorism: Legal Perspective

Regulatory and disarmament frameworks related to LAWS face a major challenge when the potential use of LAWS by terrorist organizations is taken into account. The ICRC has identified "a need for a genuinely human-centered approach to any use of these technologies in armed conflict. It will be essential to preserve human control and judgment in applications of AI... especially where they pose risks to life." The ICRC concludes that "AI and machine-learning systems remain tools that must be used to serve human actors, and augment human decision-makers, not replace them."⁷⁶

The focus of these interstate deliberations is primarily on states' utilization of AI within the framework of international law, especially IHL. States are obligated to assess and comprehend the capabilities of the weapons they deploy, and they can be held accountable for violations of IHL. However, these frameworks will not be able to halt the potential use of AI as terrorist organizations neither abide by international legal regulations nor can they be coerced to do so.

^{75.} Kallenborn, Zachary. "Applying Arms Control Frameworks to Autonomous Weapons." Brookings, October 5, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/applying-arms-control-frameworks-to-autonomous-weapons/.

^{76. &}quot;Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Armed Conflict: A Human-Centred Approach." International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), June 6, 2019. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/artificial-intelligence-and-machine-learning-armed-conflict-human-centred-approach.

In general, terrorism legislation is rooted in human intent and purposes, focusing on actions that seek to influence the government, intimidate a population, or advance religious, political, or ideological goals. While programming AI to carry out attacks for ideological purposes is prosecutable under the existing terrorism legal framework, the challenge arises when addressing precursor behaviors. Terrorism laws traditionally enable legal actions against individuals engaged in activities that precede an attack, such as the possession of information useful to terrorists. However, AI's involvement may eliminate the need for individuals to possess operational material, as instructions to AI components can be given to source information from the internet, making intervention based on possession difficult.

Furthermore, as machine decision-making plays a more significant role, establishing the necessary mental element for criminal liability becomes even more complex. The potential for AI-driven attacks, where machines act autonomously in kinetic scenarios, involving LAWS, poses unexplored challenges for terrorism legislation.

Counter-Terror Solutions for LAWS

The proliferation of autonomous systems on battlefields and the high probability of militarization of commercial autonomous technologies suggests that the threat of LAWS falling into the hands of terrorist groups is a highly probable scenario. Terrorist organizations are already deploying drones for suicide attacks. Their temptation to procure autonomous technologies for employing LAWS for terrorism cannot be ruled out at all. Countering such a level of threat will be a challenging undertaking. Therefore, prompt measures must be taken to address this threat by advancing defensive solutions and supporting practical international

collaboration to stigmatize military applications of artificial intelligence. In brief, there are two primary approaches: denial and defense. These approaches, if implemented with collaborative efforts at a global scale, can potentially deny and counter the use of LAWS by terror outfits.

Denial of LAWS' Technology to Terrorists

There is a need to develop consensus regarding the formulation and implementation of legislation against LAWS at the global scale. Terrorists and non-state outfits do not care about legalities and often pursue their objectives outside the realm of law. However, a mutually agreed legal framework will help in supporting all tangible and intangible measures necessary for countering the production and usage of LAWS by hostile actors.

The fundamental problem is the lack of mutual consensus, particularly among developed and developing nations. Every nation aims to develop and retain control over these technologies while preventing their access by others. Although all countries could gain from prohibiting the destructive uses of autonomy, the absence of universal agreement may create motivations for some nations, including non-state actors, to advance and deploy the technology independently. Denial of technology to hostile actors by exercising strong control over the regulation of AI-based technology is also often presented as a solution to secure the benefits of AI while undermining the risks in parallel.

To deny access to weaponized autonomy to terrorist outfits, three key measures can be taken. First, strict regulations that govern the entire lifecycle of LAWS can be established at national and international levels. These agreements should outline guidelines for the development, deployment, and employment of these weapons, with specific provisions designed to prevent the acquisition of au-

tonomous weapons by non-state actors. Moreover, a comprehensive framework is required to identify and regulate dual-use and commercial-grade technologies, which can potentially be militarized for hostile purposes.

Second, security measures must be integrated throughout the development and manufacturing phases to prevent unauthorized access and potential sabotage. This involves securing supply chains, facilities, and any other points vulnerable to infiltration. To protect LAWs from hacking attempts by malicious actors, continuous safeguard measures should be applied to address vulnerabilities in the programming systems.

Third, intelligence sharing, and mutual collaboration are vital to prevent terrorists or similar hostile actors from acquiring LAWs. This involves close cooperation between governments, intelligence agencies, and relevant international organizations to detect and counter attempts at illicit acquisition. Transparency and accountability at all levels should also be exercised through a mutually agreed legislative framework to ensure adherence to established regulations.

The timely conduct of these measures will be crucial as control over the spread of technology is relatively in the early stages. Once the technology standardizes at a societal level, imposing any pre-emptive control will no longer be feasible. Therefore, above mentioned measures should be applied in synergy at all tiers, from grass root level, to effectively deny the risks of falling LAWs into the wrong hands.⁷⁷

^{77.} Kwik, Jonathan. "Mitigating the Risks of Autonomous Weapon Misuse by Insurgent Groups." Laws 12, no. 1 (2023): 5. https://www.mdpi.com/2075-471X/12/1/5.

Defensive Solutions against LAWS

The challenge posed by drones and AI in counterterrorism is especially formidable due to the absence of effective counter-drone or anti-AI expertise. Targeting autonomously controlled drone swarms is particularly challenging due to their dispersion and numbers. It can be argued that the development of new defensive technologies to neutralize the threat of terror-centric LAWS is perhaps the most feasible solution, which can be formulated rather quickly even with the current level of technology. Security forces could bolster defenses against AI-driven drones by undertaking technological advancements in defensive technologies. AI technology can play a vital role, contributing to the development of defensive applications and strategies. This entails enhancing existing counter-drone systems, providing improved personnel training for capacity building of security forces, and formulating tactics to address drone or autonomous weapon threats. However, implementing anti-AI defenses on a large scale poses a considerable and costly challenge.

Currently, many state-of-the-art, air defense systems like the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Israel's Iron Dome, and Russia's S-400 Triumph air defense systems employ AI for computing and intercepting aerial threats autonomously. Warships have been using Close Weapon Systems (CIWS) like the US Phalanx for point defense against a wide spectrum of air-borne threats for the past several years. The land-based version of this system called C-RAM, has been used successfully by the US Army for defending Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) against enemy rockets, mortars, and drones in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further evolution of these systems, with superior sensor

^{78.} Osborn, Kris. "Army C-RAM Base Defense Will Destroy Drones." Warrior Maven, November 28, 2018. https://warriormaven.com/land/army-c-ram-base-defense-will-destroy-drones.

suites and higher levels of autonomy, can detect and intercept rudimentary AI-powered weaponized drones, which can be potentially used by terrorists. Moreover, in the future, High-Energy Lasers, intercept drones, etc. can serve as potent defensive solutions against terrorist autonomous weapons. But eventually, being on the defensive end will always keep vulnerability against terror outfits.

Another approach is to utilize LAWS proactively for counter-terror operations (COIN). Combat drones, operated by humans, were also popularized during the War on Terror. LAWS can find similar applications. Autonomous systems can potentially respond more rapidly to imminent threats, making split-second decisions that may be challenging for human operators.

Lethal autonomous weapons, equipped with advanced sensors, could be used for Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions to detect, identify and track known terrorists or high-value targets. Besides ISR, these weapons will be able to conduct precise and targeted strikes against terrorist cells, infrastructure, or individuals – acting as sensors and weapons simultaneously. These weapons could operate independently or in coordination with other military or intelligence assets. In sum, these systems would offer a more objective perspective, potentially averting human errors in judgment and thus avoiding collateral losses during COIN operations.

Proponents argue that in specific conditions, LAWS can outperform humans and could minimize collateral damage. They posit that autonomous systems might demonstrate more humane conduct in military settings, acting cautiously and free from the psychological pressure that can result in emotionally driven decisions. As a result, in theory, at least, these systems have the potential to reduce

the number of noncombatant casualties and minimize collateral damage. In concept, autonomous weapon systems can adhere to an inherent ethical code, thus aligning with the framework of the existing Law of Armed Conflicts (LOAC).

Moreover, to achieve the capacity to differentiate between civilian and hostile individuals, LAWS can incorporate mechanisms such as technological sophistication, integrated restrictions, system updates, and human involvement to make such distinctions, thus ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). However, despite the promises made by technology, the ability of AI to positively distinguish a civilian, and terrorist, will remain a subject of extensive debate.

Conclusion

The evolution of autonomy in weapon systems, ranging from semi-autonomous to fully autonomous, is transforming the conduct of warfare. The intersection of LAWS and the potential for their acquisition by terrorist factions presents a formidable challenge to international security. The current warfare landscape reflects a paradigm shift, where the deployment of LAWS is not only a concern for conventional military forces but also a potential tool for asymmetric warfare employed by hostile non-state actors. The proliferation of AI-based technology in the military domain, the militarization of commercial-grade technology, and the potential of leaking or inadvertently transferring this technology to terrorist factions have raised the likelihood of atrocities against humanity.

Addressing these risks demands a comprehensive and collaborative response at the multi-tier level. The legal and ethical concerns repeatedly expressed by human rights organizations and developing states highlight the urgent need for international agreements and regulations. However, major powers have repeatedly undermined such initiatives, citing the potential operational advantages offered by LAWS in future battlefields. Nevertheless, the risk of placing these weapons in the hands of terrorist organizations necessitates proactive measures for denying the availability of weaponized autonomy to terror outfits, as well as countering the rudimentary LAWS that hostile actors can potentially employ in the future. In sum, balancing technological advancement and responsible governance is imperative to mitigate the risks.

3

Hybrid Warfare: Impact of Indian Film Industry on National Security of Pakistan



Hybrid Warfare: Impact of Indian Film Industry on National Security of Pakistan

Areej Pervaiz¹

During Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's tenure (2014 to the present), Indian films have often exalted the Indian armed forces and portrayed Pakistan as the major adversary, associating the latter with terrorism and espionage. This depiction is considered a form of hybrid warfare, which not only reinforces negative stereotypes but also fosters a persistent sense of threat, influencing public opinion and negative attitudes of the Indian masses towards Pakistan. The extensive outreach and impact of the Indian film industry can potentially affect domestic perceptions, thereby damaging Pakistan's image inside India. In addition, the impact is manifesting itself globally. The narratives created through the film industry have a far-reaching psychological impact, potentially contributing to radicalization and perpetuating border tensions, eroding cultural values, and aggravating mis-

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trust between the two states and societies. This research examines the effects of Indian films on Pakistan's national security, highlighting how these mediums have been used for narrative building, portraying Pakistan as a primary adversary associated with terrorism, which in turn aggravates mistrust between the two states and minimizes space for peace and reconciliation.

Keywords: Indian Film Industry, Hybrid Warfare, Propaganda, Negative Stereotypes, Narrative Building, Public Opinion, Media Influence, National Security.

Introduction

Warfare in the present century has transformed from traditional domains to non-traditional spheres. Modern conflicts involve various tools and strategies covering both military and non-military methods such as the war of narratives, propaganda, misinformation campaigns, and cyberattacks, which are employed simultaneously. The use of these integrated and diverse methods at a time against an adversary is called hybrid warfare.² Hybrid warfare aims to destabilize and undermine opponents without engaging in open conflict.³

Bollywood, India's largest film industry, dominates the

^{2.} Hoffman, Frank G. "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars." Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007. https://www.potomacinstitute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf.

^{3.} Uzi□b□o, Jan Jakub. "United in Ambiguity? EU and NATO Approaches to Hybrid Warfare and Hybrid Threats." EU Diplomacy Papers, May 2017. https://www.coleurope.eu/sites/default/files/research-paper/edp-5-2017_uzieblo_0.pdf.

global box office with its iconic song-and-dance routines, fuelled by India's vast population and cultural influence. Bollywood's international popularity attracts significant global attention and competition for hosting premieres and film festivals. In today's interconnected world, where hybrid warfare tactics blend traditional military strategies with non-military methods such as propaganda campaigns and cyber warfare, Bollywood serves as a powerful tool for promoting Indian narratives. The Indian film industry not only offers entertainment but also shapes perceptions of Indian society and influences global audiences.⁴

Under Premier, Narendra Modi's government, the media and entertainment industry has been leveraged as tools of hybrid warfare against Pakistan. This strategy has been instrumental in shaping public opinion and promoting the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Hindutva ideology. The BJP's return during the 2014 presidential campaign elevated Modi to the forefront. The BJP has incorporated traditional Hinduism with contemporary statecraft challenges, thus promoting India as a Hindu nation and emphasizing cultural and religious harmony under Hindutva values. This often leads to a nationalist narrative that positions Pakistan as a primary adversary.

^{4. &}quot;RAW Behind Production of Anti-Pakistan Films in Bollywood." Web Desk, April 2023. https://www.radio.gov.pk/18-04-2023/raw-provides-all-kind-of-resources-to-bollywood-for-making-anti-pakistan-movies-repots.

^{5.} Ahmed, Raja Q. "Hindu Nationalism, Modi Factor and the Ideology Matrix in Contemporary India." Margalla Papers, June 2020. https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/36/18.

^{6.} Khurshd, Asif. "Expansion of Hindutva Ideology Under Modi Regime." Pakistan Today, February 2023. https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/02/25/expansion-of-hindutva-ideology-under-modi-regime/.

Bollywood has played a significant role by producing films that align with the government's narratives and ideologies. For instance, films like "Uri: The Surgical Strike" (2019) and "Mission Mangal" (2019) exemplify how Bollywood promotes the BJP's ideology. "Uri" portrays the Indian military heroically and reinforces the narrative of Pakistan as an adversary, aligning with the BJP's hardliner stance and encouraging nationalistic sentiments. The film, "Mission Mangal" promotes Indian self-reliance and national pride, resonating with the BJP's "Make in India" initiative by highlighting India's scientific and technological capabilities. These films, among others, contribute to promoting BJP's ideology by emphasizing nationalism, valorizing the military, and reinforcing the perception of external threats, particularly from Pakistan. Through such media representations, the BJP effectively uses Bollywood as a means of influencing public opinion and fortifying its political narratives both domestically and internationally.

Against the above backdrop, this study employs a qualitative research methodology to analyze the focus of the Indian film industry and its alignment with the Indian government's narratives and ideologies. Using an explanatory design and primary data (collected through content analysis of Indian news films), the research assesses how Indian media has influenced and constructed specific perceptions beyond realities against Pakistan. The weaponization of the Indian entertainment industry has generated a hostile environment, undermining Pakistan's security and impeding the prospects for a peace process between the two nations.

Narrative Paradigm Theory

Walter Fisher's theory of narrative communication posits that storytelling is innate to human nature, influencing how we perceive the world. Narratives comprise a story, storyteller, and audience, creating a shared experience.⁷ Coherence and fidelity are crucial for a narrative's effectiveness; coherent and faithful stories are more likely to be accepted and believed by the audience, thereby significantly influencing them.⁸

The Narrative Paradigm Theory offers insights into the use of narratives in India-Pakistan hybrid warfare, where India employs coherent narratives to shape public opinion. This theory also applies to the Indian film industry, known for narrative-driven films that influence public opinion. Some films contribute to negative narratives about Pakistan, thereby fuelling anti-Pakistan sentiments. For example, the film "Uri: The Surgical Strike" (2019) is a prominent instance of this phenomenon. The movie dramatizes the Indian Army's surgical strikes on militant launch pads in "Pakistan-administered Kashmir" in 2016, following a terrorist attack on an Indian army base. The film is highly patriotic, portraying the Indian military in a heroic light and reinforcing the narrative of Pakistan as a primary adversary involved in terrorism. This portrayal encourages nationalistic sentiments, aligns with the BJP's hard-line stance against Pakistan, and promotes a sense of pride and unity under the current government. Furthermore, the film

^{7.} Stache, Lara C. "Fisher Narrative Paradigm." SAGE, December 2018. https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i5726.xml.

^{8. &}quot;The Narrative Paradigm." Communication Theory, July 2014. https://www.communicationtheory.org/the-narrative-paradigm/.

"Mission Mangal" (2019), while focusing on India's Mars mission, subtly promotes themes of self-reliance and national pride, resonating with the BJP's "Make in India" initiative. The portrayal of strong Indian scientists and the emphasis on India's capabilities reflect the government's agenda to promote national pride and technological advancement.9

This research includes an analysis of specific Indian films that feature dialogues portraying Pakistan negatively on a global scale. The selected movies are as follows:

Haider	2014	Vishal Bhardwaj	Shahid Kapoor
Phantom	2015	Kabir Khan	Saif Ali Khan
Bangistan	2015	Karan Anshuman	Riteish Deshmukh & Pulkit Samrat
Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran	2018	Abhishek Sharma	John Abraham
Romeo Akbar Walter	2019	Robby Grewal	John Abraham
Sooryavanshi	2021	Rohit Shetty	Akshay Kumar
Mission Majnu	2023	Shantanu Bagchi	Sidharth Malhotra

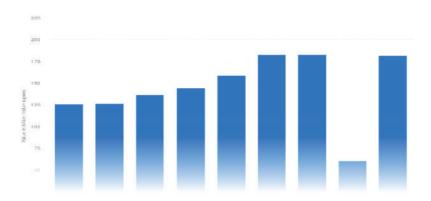
Global Reach of the Indian Film Industry

The Indian film industry has achieved global recognition, particularly within the Indian diaspora residing overseas and at prestigious festivals like Cannes. With widespread theatrical releases in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) and support from streaming platforms like Netflix, Indian films blend local and global influences,

^{9.} Hussain, Tauqeer. "21st Century Warfare and Pakistan's Military Response." Pakistan Research Repository, September 2019. https://prr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/bitstream/123456789/12349/1/Tauqeer%20%20Hussain%20internation%20relations%202019%20iiui%20prr.pdf.

shaping the thought processes of audiences worldwide.

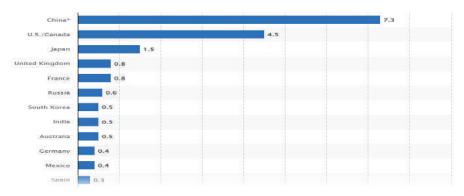
Figure 1: Value of the film industry in India from financial year 2014 to 2019, with forecasts until 2024 (in billion Indian rupees)



India's film industry faced a significant decline in 2021 due to COVID-19 but rebounded in the fiscal year 2022 with an impressive 196% growth. Despite the setbacks of the pandemic, India has remained the world's largest film producer since 2007 and continues to lead in ticket sales. Films like "Uri" exemplify high returns, showcasing the industry's resilience and growth potential in the post-pandemic era.¹⁰

Figure 2: Leading box office markets worldwide in 2021, by revenue (In billion U.S. dollars)

^{10. &}quot;India: Value of the Film Industry 2022." Statista, September 2020. https://www.statista.com/statistics/235837/value-of-the-film-industry-in-india/.



(Source: Statista Research Department)¹¹

In 2021, China emerged as the leading global box office earner, generating \$7.3 billion, which surpassed the combined earnings of the US, Canada, Japan, and the UK. France and the UK tied for fourth place, each reporting box office revenues of \$800 million. In 2022, India achieved a significant milestone by selling over 981 million movie tickets, exceeding the combined ticket sales of China, the US, Mexico, and Japan. Concurrently, the US and Canada witnessed a 64.4% increase in revenue, contrasting with a decline in China's box office earnings. These trends indicate notable shifts in the global film industry dynamics, highlighting China's rising influence, India's substantial audience engagement, and growth in the North American market.¹²

^{11. &}quot;Top Box Office Markets Worldwide by Revenue 2021." Statista, March 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/243180/leading-box-office-markets-worldwide-by-revenue/.

^{12. &}quot;Top Film Markets by Number of Tickets Sold 2021." Statista, January 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/252729/leading-film-markets-worldwide-by-number-of-tickets-sold/.

Indian Film Industry: A Reflection of BJP's Narratives

Bollywood films frequently portray Pakistan as the main antagonist, reflecting the stance of Modi's government. In contrast, there is a noticeable absence of Chinese villains, despite the ongoing India-China border disputes. This suggests that China is not perceived as a major threat to India, contrary to the narrative often used by New Delhi to garner Western support. Recent Indian films like "Uri: The Surgical Strike" and "Phantom" focus on portraying Pakistan as a primary adversary, while movies such as "Mission Mangal" celebrate Indian achievements without emphasizing "Chinese threats." This selective portrayal aligns with the political narrative of the current Indian administration.

This trend reflects growing anti-Muslim sentiment, with Muslim characters often depicted negatively and a decline in the positive representation of Urdu. For instance, in the film "Padmaavat," the Muslim ruler Alauddin Khilji is portrayed as a barbaric antagonist, and in "Kesari," the Muslim invaders are depicted as ruthless enemies. The use of Urdu, traditionally associated with Muslim culture in India, is also seen less favourably, with fewer films featuring the language positively. This shift aligns with the broader narrative of the current political climate in India. It has strained relations with Pakistani viewers, prompting calls for a more rational approach to producing high-budget movies.

Many analysts have examined Bollywood's impact on

^{13.} Bhutto, Fatima. "Bollywood is Obsessed with Pakistan. We'd Be Flattered If It Weren't So Nasty." The Guardian, February 3, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/feb/03/bollywood-pakistan-muslims-narendra-modi-india.

public opinion and the Indian government's censorship of critical content. Some have focused on the production of films portraying Pakistan negatively,¹⁴ highlighting the influence of political narratives on cinematic representation. Analysts have also discussed the government's suppression of a BBC documentary¹⁵ that questioned Modi's role in the Gujarat riots, noting the ban on the documentary and the arrest of students attempting to screen it. This suggests a trend of stifling dissent and controlling public discourse.¹⁶ Scholars warn that Bollywood's failure to counter hatred could undermine its historical role in bringing joy to South Asian audiences. By prioritizing narratives that align with the current political climate, Bollywood risks alienating segments of its audience and exacerbating regional tensions.

Rise of Anti-Pakistan Bollywood and BJP's Return

• Haider (2014)

"Haider," directed by Vishal Bhardwaj in 2014, is an adaptation of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" that addresses the Kashmir conflict through the character of Haider, portrayed by Shahid Kapoor. The film intricately explores regional complexities, highlighting the tensions among armed forces, militants, and residents.¹⁷ It primarily examines the personal and psychological impact of the Kashmir conflict on individuals, subtly hinting at external involvement, including that of Pakistan, without explicitly detailing specific

^{14.} Bhutto, "Bollywood is obsessed with Pakistan."

^{15.} Cookson, Richard, and Mike Radford. "India: The Modi Question." BBC, January 2023. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0dkb144.

^{16.} Kumar, Sanjay. "Indian Students Defy Ban on Modi Documentary Despite Arrests." Arab News, January 2023. https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2240401/media.

^{17.} Haider. Directed by Vishal Bhardwaj. Released 2014, India. Film.

roles. Several dialogues within the film are directly critical of Pakistan, reflecting broader geopolitical tensions.

For instance, in one scene, an Indian Army officer says: "Dushman ka Dushman hamara dost hai. Is liye koi bhi group ya individual jo Hizbul Mujahideen aur Pakistan ki proxy war ke khilaf hai, koi bhi, surrendered militants, detainees aur undertrials is group ka hissa ban sakte hain." (41:20) Translation: The enemy's foes are our friends. Any individual or group, anyone with a grudge against Hizbul Mujahideen or Pakistan's proxy war, be it surrendered militants, detainees, or undertrials can become part of this group. This dialogue reflects the film's nuanced depiction of the Kashmir conflict, addressing the complexities of alliances and enmities in the region. In another scene, the film suggests that militants attacking Kashmir receive training in Pakistan. For instance, a character says: "Militants se dostiyaan bana raha hai tu? Aaj pistol laya hai. Kal Kalashnikov layega! Sarhad paar jayega tu. Jayega sarhad paar?" (49:10) Translation: Now you are friends with militants? Today, you are holding a pistol, you will turn to grab a Kalashnikov tomorrow! Are you going for weapons training across the border?

These dialogues highlight the film's exploration of the external influences and internal strife contributing to the Kashmir conflict, portraying the complex web of regional and cross-border interactions. In another scene, an Indian army officer in the film attributes blame to Pakistan for supplying arms and training militants. The officer states: "Main ap logon ko yaad dilana chata hun k jo mulk aj gumrah kashmiri larkon ko, masoomon ke qatal ke liye arms aur

training de raha hai, usi mulk ke logon ne 1948 main kabailiyon ke bhes main kashmiriyon ko loota tha. Unki auraton ko rape kia tha, bachun ko kata tha." (59:50) Translation: I would like to remind you that our neighbouring country provides arms and training to misguided Kashmiri youth to kill innocent people. In 1948, they had looted Kashmiris when they arrived here disguised as tribals. They raped women and killed children. This dialogue highlights the film's portrayal of historical grievances and contemporary accusations concerning Pakistan's alleged role in perpetuating violence and unrest in Kashmir. The dialogues in the aforementioned film are deplorable, condemnable, and inappropriate, and undoubtedly reflect India's efforts to tarnish Pakistan's image through its film industry.

Additionally, the same film further portrays an Indian army officer denying allegations of Indian army involvement in the torture of Kashmiri individuals. In response to a reporter's question about the legality of torture on detainees, the officer states: "Reporter: Does a law allow you to torture people you have arrested? Army Officer: The Indian army is one of the most disciplined armed forces in the world. We train our officers to interrogate, not torture." (1:00:00) This dialogue illustrates the film's portrayal of the Indian army's official stance on interrogation practices and its attempt to rebut allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir. A character states: "I want you to understand the ground reality. Separatist leaders Hindustan se Azaadi nahi Pakistan se Ghulami maang rahy hain." (1:00:53) Translation: Separatist leaders are not demanding freedom from India but enslavement to Pakistan. This statement accentuates the film's narrative concerning the motivations and allegiances of Kashmiri separatist leaders, emphasizing a perspective aligned with the Indian government's position on the region's political dynamics and effort to deepen bilateral mistrust with Pakistan.

The international acclaim and screening of "Haider" at prestigious events like the Busan International Film Festival have amplified its narrative on a global stage. This increased visibility can shape international perceptions of Pakistan, potentially reinforcing stereotypes of Pakistan as a state sponsoring terrorism or contributing to regional instability. Such movies can influence public opinion both within India and internationally, shaping how audiences perceive Pakistan's role in the Kashmir conflict and broader regional geopolitics. Irrational and negative depictions in popular media can solidify biases thus hindering any possibility of a peace process and conflict resolution between India and Pakistan.

• Phantom (2015)

"Phantom," a 2015 film directed by Kabir Khan, centers on Indian soldier Daniyal Khan's mission to eliminate perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The film portrays Pakistan as the originating source of the terrorist group responsible for the attacks, framing Indian covert operations within Pakistan as a pursuit of justice. Some dialogues in the film explicitly depict Pakistan as a hub for terrorist activities, potentially undermining the country's reputation on a global stage. For example, an Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) intelligence officer states: "Sajid Mir, Lashkar's top military trainer, also known as Sajid

^{18.} Phantom. Directed by Kabir Khan. Released 2015, India. Film.

Majeed, Sajid Bill, Uncle Bill, Abu Bara—these are all his aliases. He trained all the terrorists involved in the 26/11 attacks, planned all the operations, and that night, from Karachi, he gave instructions to the terrorists while watching our news channels." (24:42)

In the film, Nawaz (played by Katrina Kaif) delivers dialogues portraying Pakistan as a safe haven for terrorists: "Mumbai attack ke peeche jo sab se baray terrorist Pakistan main araam se bethe hain unhe saza nae milegi?" (57:54) Translation: Will the biggest terrorists behind the Mumbai attack, comfortably sitting in Pakistan, not face any punishment? "Lashkar-e-Taiba ka supreme leader Haris Saeed, Dunya ki har most wanted terrorist list mein iska naam hai, lekin khule aam ghoomta hai. Ek taraf Kalashnikov liye Lashkar ke aadmi isey protection detay hain aur doosri taraf police aur beshak Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) bhi." (1:05:40) Translation: Haris Saeed, the supreme leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba, is on the world's most wanted terrorist list, yet he roams freely. On one hand, Lashkar's men protect him with Kalashnikovs, and on the other hand, the police and of course the ISI.

"Phantom" generated controversy due to its portrayal of Pakistan as a center for terrorism, prompting criticism for perpetuating negative stereotypes. ¹⁹ While the film received mixed reviews for its narrative and action depicting real-world events, it faced backlash for oversimplifying intricate geopolitical issues. Banned in Pakistan for its offensive and inaccurate portrayal, the movie revolves around a

^{19.} Tsering, Lisa. "'Phantom': Film Review." Hollywood Reporter, August 2015. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-reviews/phantom-film-review-3-818583/.

fictional mission set after the 2008 Mumbai attacks to eradicate masterminds in Pakistan. The representation of Indian stereotypes in this film underpins negative attitudes and misconceptions about Pakistan. India's efforts to depict Pakistan negatively through its films make it harder to rebuild trust and confidence between the two countries.

• Bangistan (2015)

"Bangistan" is a satirical comedy film that chronicles the misadventures of two aspiring terrorists—one Muslim and one Hindu—who find themselves unintentionally assigned to the same mission: bombing a peace conference in Poland. The film employs humour to delve into themes of religious extremism and terrorism, offering a satirical take on religious stereotypes and fanaticism. Pakistani characters are portrayed in a satirical light, contributing to the film's critique of extremism and societal divisions.²⁰

In the beginning, the film features a dialogue that overtly labels a Muslim character as a terrorist. When Harold reveals his real name, Hafiz Bin Ali, to an Englishman, the exchange unfolds as follows: "Tell me your real name? Hafiz Bin Ali. Hafiz Bin Ali? You are flirting with a terrorist." (08:56), "Shut up and listen to me, I'll personally send a drone to Afghanistan to blow you up." (09:08), "Remember what we did to Osama Bin Laden? Remember? I am going to ask Mossad to do the same to you. I'll have them cut your head off and I need your eyeballs straight off the BBQ...Terrorist!" (09:20).

^{20.} Bangistan. Directed by Karan Anshuman. Released 2015, India. Film.

These dialogues exemplify the film's satirical approach to addressing and critiquing religious extremism and stereotypes by using exaggerated and provocative language to highlight the absurdity of associating individuals' names or backgrounds with terrorism. Through humour and hyperbole, the film aims to challenge and ridicule the simplistic and prejudiced views that often underpin religious and cultural intolerance. By presenting such exchanges, "Bangistan" seeks to provoke thought and encourage viewers to question and reflect on the harmful effects of stereotyping and fanaticism.

• Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran (2018)

"Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran" is a historical drama that depicts India's covert nuclear tests conducted in 1998. The film follows Officer Ashwat Raina, portrayed by John Abraham, who leads a team to execute the mission in Pokhran. The film illustrates the competitive nuclear environment in South Asia, where India's decision to conduct nuclear tests was influenced by regional security concerns, particularly the perceived threats from China and Pakistan. It is depicted that India's nuclear tests were a response to Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. The film underscores the urgency and secrecy surrounding the tests to avoid detection by global powers and prevent Pakistan from pre-emptively responding.

The movie also portrays the efforts of a Pakistani ISI spy collaborating with a CIA agent to thwart India's nuclear test. This narrative element underscores the international stakes and opposition India faced during the mission. A notable dialogue captures this dynamic: "Hamari Paki-

stan ki ISI bhi kuch kam nahi parhti apki CIA se" (1:11:30) Translation: Our Pakistani ISI is no less than your CIA. Another critical moment occurs when the main character says: "Sir, hamein test is waqt karna hoga. Sir, woh Pakistani spy tha mera phone uske paas hai. Apko pata hai us mein kitni vital information hai?" (1:41:18) Translation: We have to conduct the test right away. He was a Pakistani spy and my phone was with him. Do you have any clue that the phone carries very vital information?

This movie portrays Pakistan as an active adversary attempting to sabotage India's nuclear ambitions. Through its dialogues and plot, the film emphasizes Pakistan's role in hindering India's progress, depicting it as a nation intent on obstructing India's scientific and strategic achievements. This portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes about Pakistan, presenting it as a persistent threat to India's national security. By projecting the untrue narrative of the espionage efforts of Pakistani agents, the film accentuates the geopolitical rivalry and animosity between the two countries, framing Pakistan as an antagonist in India's narrative of becoming a nuclear power. This negative depiction contributes to the broader political discourse, reflecting and potentially amplifying existing tensions and hostilities between India and Pakistan.²¹

• Romeo Akbar Walter (2019)

"Romeo Akbar Walter" is a 2019 Indian espionage thriller that centers on the character of Romeo Ali. Ali is recruited by RAW, The Indian foreign intelligence agency, and

 $^{21\,.}$ Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran. Directed by Abhishek Sharma. Released 2018, India. Film.

adopts the identity of Akbar Malik to infiltrate Pakistan's ISI. Throughout the film, Ali navigates high-stakes espionage and perilous situations to gather crucial intelligence for India. The narrative portrays Pakistan's military as an extremist force, allegedly involved in acts of brutality towards the population of East Pakistan. This depiction reflects the historical tensions and complex geopolitical dynamics between India and Pakistan, particularly during the period leading up to the East Pakistan War in 1971.

In one scene, Shrikant Rai, an intelligence officer, says, "Pakistani hukumat ke zulm se East Pakistan ki awaam behad na khush thi." Translation: The people of East Pakistan were upset with the brutality of their government. (02:30). Moreover, in another scene, he states: "Isi hotel main kaam ke silsale main, Karachi se aik bohat hi important guest rehne ke liye aana wala hai. Isaq Afridi. Apnay watan se behad mohabbat krne wala Pakistani. Top Arms supplier. Pakistani Army Chief ka khass aur tumhare taale ki chabi." (25:26) Translation: An important guest is arriving for work purposes from Karachi to stay at the hotel. A Pakistani who loves his country more than himself. He is very close to the Chief of the Pakistan Army and a key for your lock.

Additionally, another character, discussing the relationship between Isaq Afridi and the Pakistani Army, said: "Itnay be human contracts Afridi ko itni asaani se kese mil jaate hain? Itna mushkil kya hai, sahib. Pakistani Army Chief General Jahangir Alam, unki jaib main Isaq Afridi ke har deal ka bohat barra hissa jata hai. Janab, inki sath ganth se sabse zayada do logon ko nuksaan hai. Aik tu, Isaq Af-

ridi ke khud ke bete Nawab Afridi ko, aur dosra woh Pakistan Army main jo do number ki beyran pe bethe hain na. ISI Chief, Lieutenant General Ghazi Ali Hayat. Dono main gehri dosti hai, Janab. Aur dono is muqay ki talash main hain ke kab Isaq Afridi aur Army Chief ki jagah le lein." (42:50) Translation: How does Afridi get such contracts? It is not that tough, sir. The Chief of Army, General Jahangir Alam gets a hefty percentage of every deal. Their tie-up is dangerous for two people. Isaq Afridi's son, Nawab Afridi, and the one in the Pakistan Army, ISI Chief, Lieutenant General Ghazi Ali Hayat. They are best friends. They are just waiting for an opportunity to replace the Chief of Army, Isaq Afridi. The film accused Pakistan's soldiers of killing scholars and students in Dhaka, projecting a narrative that holds Pakistan responsible for these atrocities. This depiction contributes to the broader strategy of using media as a tool to construct and reinforce negative perceptions of Pakistan, further straining relations between the two countries and influencing international viewpoints on historical events.

In another scene, a character says: "Teen din pehle Dhaka University main jo massacre hua tha. Jahan pe 22 scholars aur students Pakistani soldiers ke haaton mare gaye thay." (52:25) Translation: Three days ago, the Dhaka University was attacked. The Pakistani soldiers slaughtered 22 scholars and students. Moreover, it is shown in the film, that during his mission, Akbar is captured and tortured by the ISI in a detention cell in Karachi, Pakistan. (1:53:00) The film depicts the harsh treatment and interrogation methods employed allegedly by Pakistan's ISI to extract information from him. The untrue portrayal of ISI's actions in

the film showcases India's hatred towards Pakistan and the adversarial relationship between the intelligence agencies of India and Pakistan.²²

In this movie, Indian RAW agents are depicted as infiltrating the Pakistan Army with remarkable ease, emphasizing the strategic and tactical prowess of Indian intelligence. The protagonist, Akbar Malik, skilfully adopts multiple identities to penetrate Pakistani military and intelligence circles, illustrating the meticulous planning and high-risk nature of espionage. This portrayal underscores the importance of intelligence operations in maintaining national security, as reflected in the dialogue highlighting India's advantage over Pakistan due to effective espionage. Additionally, the film brings to light the ethical complexities and human costs associated with such covert operations, particularly through the depiction of Akbar's capture and torture by ISI. While dramatized for cinematic effect, the narrative reinforces public perceptions of the superiority of Indian intelligence and the ongoing adversarial relationship with Pakistan, shaping nationalistic sentiments and providing insight into the intricate world of intelligence warfare.

Sooryavanshi (2021)

"Sooryavanshi" is an action thriller film centered around DCP Veer Sooryavanshi, the head of Mumbai's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS). The narrative follows a series of bomb blasts that strike the city, unveiling a plot masterminded by individuals with connections to Pakistan. The film portrays several characters from Pakistan as being involved

^{22.} Romeo Akbar Walter. Directed by Robbie Grewal. Released 2019, India. Film.

in orchestrating terrorist attacks in Mumbai.²³ Additionally, it shows Muslims linked to the 12 March 1993 Bombay bombings, highlighting that these individuals fled to Pakistan after the attacks. The storyline, therefore, focuses on themes of terrorism and cross-border conspiracies, emphasizing the efforts of the ATS in countering these threats and maintaining the city's security.

In this movie, the narrative incorporates a critical scene where a character reveals significant information about the masterminds behind the bomb blasts. The dialogue states, "Magar sir sunane main aaraha hai ke is blast ke peeche mastermind Bilal Ahmed aur Tiger India chor ke ja chuke hain. Tiger Iran chala gaya aur Bilal Ahmed POK, Omar Hafeez ke paas. Omar Hafeez ISI ke saary gair qanooni kaam krta tha. Aur 93 blast ke bombers ko explosives banana ki training bhi Omar ke zarye hi di gayi thi." (02:00) Translation: We heard the masterminds behind these attacks, Bilal Ahmed and Tiger have fled from India. Tiger went to Iran; Bilal went to POK, to join Omar Hafeez. Omar Hafeez used to do all of ISI's illegal work. Omar was also instrumental in training the 93's bombers in making explosives. This dialogue highlights the connections between the bombers and their support networks, pointing to the involvement of Pakistan-based individuals and the ISI in facilitating and training the terrorists responsible for the attacks. The character's revelation underscores the cross-border implications of terrorism and the extensive network that supports such activities. This scene, among others in the film, portrays the complexities and challenges faced by the Mumbai Anti-Terrorism Squad in combating

^{23.} Sooryavanshi. Directed by Rohit Shetty. Released 2021, India. Film.

terrorism and safeguarding the city. "1999 main Omar ne ISI ki madad se terrorist organization Lashkar ki shuruvat ki. Aur badle main ISI ne unhein Kargil ki jang main Istemal kiya." (03:03) Translation: In 1999, ISI helped Omar start a terrorist organization called Lashkar. In turn, ISI used them in the Kargil war.

Another Muslim terrorist Riyaz Hafeez, son of Omar Hafeez, was captured by Indian ATS in the movie and portrayed as he came from Pakistan to India for attacks. He says, "2007 main India-Pakistan cricket match dekhne tum Pakistan se Mumbai, Mohali tourist visa pr aaye thay, magar wapis nahi gaye." (17:20) Translation: In 2007 you came from Pakistan on a tourist visa to watch the India-Pakistan cricket match in Mohali, but never left. Moreover, "Central Agency ke report main tumhara involvement 2011 Mumbai train blast, uske baad Pune bakery, Bangelore bus stand, Srinagar military base." (17:47) Translation: In Central Agency report, you were involved in the 2011 Mumbai train blast, then in Pune bakery, Bangalore bus stand, and Srinagar military base.

In the movie, several elements contribute to its controversial portrayal of Muslims and Pakistan. The film includes a scene where a Muslim leader, Kader Usmani, is depicted as brainwashing young Indian Muslims into becoming terrorists. In a scene, a character accuses him: "Ap bharkao bhashan dete hain, Ap dharma ke naam pe masoom bachon ko gumrah bhi krte hain." (45:26) Translation: You give inciting speeches and mislead innocent children in the name of religion.

The narrative also suggests that Pakistan serves as a base for terrorism and is depicted as an undesirable destination due to its association with terrorism. This is highlighted in a dialogue where Ranveer Singh's character questions the desirability of Pakistan as a tourist destination: "Lekin kabhi bhi bahar wala sochta hai chalo family ko le ke udhr ja ke chutti manane ka? Nahi, Kyun? Maloom? Apki wajah se. Terrorism zayada tu tourism kam. Abhi dekho apna cricketer logon ki feeling ap logon ko bhi samjhna chaiye, jese apna Wasim, Misbah, Shoaib. Abhi aphi key eh jihad vihad ke chakar main unka tu pora IPL se wicket hi chote gaya. Terrorism zayada tu income kam. Jese apna artist log hai Fawad Khan, Ali Zafar, Atif Aslam...lekin abhi apke chakar main un logon ka bhi hogaya na dukaan bnd. Terrorism zayada tu entertainment kam. Aur aese hi chalta raha na Riyaaz baho, tu apni idhr ki public tu tiyar bethi hi hai, par who din dur nahi hai, jab Pakistan kea am log bhi aap ko dhoond dhoond ke jootay chapel se maarne ko dekhe ge." (2:03:35) Translation: But does anyone plan a family vacation there? No, they don't. Do you know why? It is because of you. Terrorism is bad for tourism. You should think about cricketers as well. Like Wasim, Misbah, Shoaib. Because of your Jihad they are unable to play in the Indian Premier League (IPL). There are artists like Fawad Khan, Ali Zafar, Atif Aslam. Because of you, they are unable to work now. Terrorism is bad for entertainment. Remember, if that continues, the people of this country are already against you, but one day, the people of Pakistan will also come after you with stones and sticks.

The release of "Sooryavanshi" sparked significant controversy due to its perceived anti-Muslim content. Arif Alvi,

the former President of Pakistan has objected to the contents of the film. A famous Pakistani actress, Mehwish Hayat, who has been honored with the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz for her contributions to the film industry has also publicly criticized the film for its Islamophobic nature. The portrayal of the villain as Muslim raised concerns about stereotyping and negative representation. Director Rohit Shetty defended the film, arguing that it highlights the association of terrorism with specific individuals rather than a blanket condemnation of religion. Despite these claims, the film is seen by many as part of a broader trend in Indian cinema to negatively depict Pakistan and Muslims.²⁴ This has drawn substantial criticism and sparked ongoing discussions about the impact of such portrayals on public perception and interfaith relations.

• Mission Majnu (2023)

"Mission Majnu" is a Bollywood film depicting a RAW agent's covert mission in the 1970s to infiltrate Pakistan and gather crucial information. The narrative focuses on the agent's mission to extract classified information about Pakistan's activities posing a threat to national security.²⁵ At the start of the movie, it is portrayed that Pakistan after losing the war with India, is making nuclear bombs for revenge purposes. In a scene, the agent says, "1971: Pakistan India se teesri baar jang har chukka tha. They wanted revenge at all costs. India par dhaak jatane ka ab unke pass aik hi tareeka tha: to make a nuclear bomb." (1:45) Translation: in 1971, Pakistan lost the war to India for the third

^{24.} Salamat, Sajid. "'Sooryavanshi' Faces Backlash on Social Media." Daily Times, last modified November 21, 2021. https://dailytimes.com.pk/844459/sooryavanshi-faces-backlash-on-social-media/.

^{25.} Mission Majnu. Directed by Shantanu Bagchi. Released 2023, India. Film.

time. They had only one way left to defeat India: to make a nuclear bomb. The movie shows that Indian RAW agents are spread all over Pakistan. The agent further says, "Hamre RAW agents Peshawar se Karachi tak infiltrate kr chuke thay." (02:06) Translation: Our RAW agents infiltrated Pakistan from Peshawar to Karachi.

The movie depicts that Pakistan, to make nuclear weapons, will go to any extent. For instance, the main character says "Pakistan nuclear bomb banana ke liye kisi bhi hadh tak ja skta tha. Aur unke is irade ko anjaam dene wala tha A. Q. Khan, Dunya ka sabse khatarnak scientist." (14:08) Translation: Pakistan was ready to go to any extent to make a nuclear bomb and to make it happen, they brought in A. Q. Khan. The most dangerous scientist in the world.

The film also demonstrates that Pakistan is making nuclear weapons using illegal means and banned nuclear components. The narrator says "Aik taraf PM Bhutto India par ilzam laga rahay thay. Aur dosri taraf unka illegal nuclear program zoron shoron se chal raha tha. Enter Colonel Gadhafi of Libya, Dunya k liye terrorist lekin Pakistan ka qareebi dost. Gadhafi ne Pakistan ko 500 million dollars ki funding di. European black market banned nuclear components smuggle kiye gaye aur nuclear bomb main istemal hone wala uranium ki daskat Africa se hue." (14:50) Translation: On one hand, PM Bhutto was pointing fingers at India. On the other hand, his illegal nuclear program was in full swing. He's a terrorist to the world, but for Pakistan, he's a close ally. Gadhafi provided 500 million dollars in funding to Pakistan. Banned nuclear components were smuggled in from the European black market and the uranium used in the nuclear bomb was smuggled from Africa.

The character of the RAW chief says "Who aik kattar desh hai. India pe nuclear attack krne se pehle, you know they won't think twice." (18:50) Translation: It's a radical country. Before launching a nuclear attack on India, you know they won't think twice. The military of Pakistan is also negatively portrayed in the film. A RAW agent says "Rawalpindi Pakistan Army ka headquarter hai. Aur Aman acchi tarhan janta hai ke Pakistan ko government nahi uski army chalati hai." (25:05) Translation: Pakistan's Army headquarters are in Rawalpindi. Aman knows that Pakistan is not run by the government but by its army.

The film portrays Pakistan as a terrorist state that will provide nuclear weapons to Islamic dictators and terrorist groups, so the film negatively projects that nuclear weapons are not safe with Pakistan. A RAW officer says "Pakistan ne Gadhafi ke sath deal ki hai. Funding ke badle woh unko nuclear bombs supply kar rahy hain. Aur woh din dur nahi jab har Islami dictator aur terrorist group ke paas nuclear bomb hoga." (39:30) Translation: Pakistan has made a deal with Gadhafi. They will provide nuclear bombs in exchange for funding and soon, every Islamic dictator and terrorist group will have this bomb!

The military is running the country under government and all decisions are made by the military in Pakistan. The RAW chief says "Kehne ke liye tu Pakistan aik democracy hai. Lekin asal main, wahan military raj krti hai. Wahan kisi bhi waqt PM ka takhta palat skta hai. General Zia-ul-Haq behad shatir aur kattar wali soch wala dictator tha."

(52:25) Translation: in theory, Pakistan is a democracy but in reality, the military runs the country. The PM's chair could be toppled. General Zia-ul-Haq was a very cunning and radical dictator.

India is trying to portray in this film that Pakistan's nuclear program is not safe. The RAW agent says "Pakistan jesi unstable country ke pass nuclear bomb hona India ke liye tabahi hai sir." (1:15:30) Translation: A nuclear bomb in an unstable country like Pakistan means the destruction of India. It is also shown in the movie that Pakistan is unaware of Indian RAW agents within its borders and is complacent, indicating that nuclear weapons should not be in the hands of such a country. The narrator says "Indian Agents ke sacrifice ki waja se, Kahuta ke secret nuclear facility dunya ke samne expose hogae. Phir bhi Zia is sach se inkaar krta raha." (2:04:10) Translation: Because of the sacrifice of Indian agents, the secret nuclear facility in Kahuta was exposed to the world. Yet, Zia kept denying this truth.

The release of Mission Majnu sparked controversy over its portrayal of Pakistan and Muslims in Indian cinema. While criticized by Pakistani netizens as propaganda, the film unexpectedly became a top trending movie in Pakistan after its Netflix premiere. This led to confusion among Pakistani Twitter users, with some watching it to verify its content and others criticizing its alleged distortion of facts.²⁶

Through films like "Mission Majnu," Indian cinema crafts compelling stories that shape public opinion, promote na-

^{26. &}quot;Pakistanis May Be Watching Bollywood's Mission Majnu but It's Not Because It's Good." Dawn, January 2023. https://images.dawn.com/news/1191426.

tionalistic sentiments, and justify India's actions against Pakistan. By portraying Pakistan as a radical and unstable state pursuing nuclear weapons through illegal means, the film reinforces negative stereotypes and legitimizes India's intelligence operations. While this narrative construction promotes a sense of pride and vigilance among Indian audiences, it also perpetuates a climate of mistrust and enmity between the two nations. The film's impact extends beyond national borders, influencing international perceptions of Pakistan and potentially straining its diplomatic relations. Additionally, such portrayals can provoke anti-Indian sentiments within Pakistan, leading to a media war and further complicating efforts toward peace and mutual understanding.

Implications for Pakistan's National Security

The Indian media, influenced by Prime Minister Modi's administration, engages in hybrid warfare against Pakistan by disseminating misinformation and portraying the country in a negative light. This strategy fosters Islamophobia and undermines peace initiatives, significantly affecting bilateral relations, diplomatic efforts, and both global and domestic perceptions of Pakistan.²⁷ The Modi government's sway over the media incites anti-Pakistan sentiments, which in turn jeopardizes Pakistan's national security. The media frequently associates Pakistan with terrorism, thereby tarnishing its international reputation. Furthermore, India has actively lobbied for Pakistan's inclusion on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) "grey list," and has advocated for its continued presence on the

^{27.} Goel, Vindu, and Jeffrey Gettleman. "Under Modi, India's Press Is Not So Free Anymore." The New York Times, April 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/world/asia/modi-india-press-media.html.

list, citing Pakistan's purported failures in combating terrorism.²⁸

Under Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, India's assertive foreign policy and support for Baloch independence have exacerbated tensions in South Asia. A notable instance of this occurred when Modi referenced Balochistan in his 2016 Independence Day speech,²⁹ signaling India's endorsement of the Baloch separatist movement. Pakistan perceived this as interference in its internal affairs, further deteriorating India-Pakistan relations and contributing to regional instability. Research indicates a shift in government policy towards Hindutva under Modi's leadership, with the BJP integrating Hindu nationalism into state governance.30 This ideological shift is reflected in increased border tensions and incidents such as surgical strikes and the controversial Balakot airstrikes, which Pakistan claims were fictitious.³¹ Additionally, the alignment of Bollywood's narratives with the BJP's ideology has reinforced this nationalist agenda, portraying India predominantly as a Hindu nation.³² This cultural representation supports the broader political narrative espoused by the BJP, further embedding Hindu nationalism within the fabric of Indian statecraft and society.

^{28. &}quot;India Admits It 'ensured' Pakistan Remains on Grey List." The Express Tribune, July 2021. https://tribune.com.pk/story/2311285/india-admits-it-ensured-pakistan-remains-on-grey-list.

^{29.} Shams, Shamil. "Modi's Balochistan Comments Upset Pakistan." Deutsche Welle, August 2016. https://www.dw.com/en/indian-pm-modis-balochistan-comments-upset-pakistan/a-19475682.

^{30.} Ahmed. "Hindu Nationalism."

^{31 .} Raina, Badri. "Citizenship Amendment Bill: A Warning Bell for the Republic." The Wire, December 2019. https://thewire.in/religion/citizenship-amendment-bill-hindu-rashtra.

^{32 .} Zafar, Salman. "Pakistan and Bollywood: A Broken Bond." Al Jazeera, January 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/19/pakistan-and-bollywood-a-broken-bond.

The Pulwama attack resulted in the Indian media attributing the incident to Pakistan-based groups, thereby escalating tensions despite a lack of conclusive evidence. The subsequent Balakot airstrike, although minimally impactful in terms of actual damage, was heavily sensationalized by the media. This sensationalism involved the dissemination of false claims and propaganda, which aimed to diplomatically isolate Pakistan on the international stage. Such media practices have contributed to the deterioration of bilateral relations and have further complicated efforts toward regional stability.³³

A Brussels-based non-governmental organization uncovered a network, supported by the Indian Srivastava Group and the video news agency ANI, that has been disseminating fake news to tarnish Pakistan's international reputation for over 15 years. This extensive operation involved 265 websites across 65 countries, systematically spreading false information to portray Pakistan in a negative light. The revelation of this network underscores the sophisticated and long-term efforts to influence global perceptions and undermine Pakistan's standing on the international stage.

The Modi government in India promotes nationalist films that emphasize patriotism and military valor, supporting these productions with various incentives. It exerts control over film certification and content regulation to ensure alignment with its ideological stance, potentially restrict-

^{33 .} Wasif, Afnan. "Impact of India's Hybrid Warfare on Pakistan's National Security." Pakistan Today, June 2022. https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/06/12/impact-of-indias-hybrid-warfare-on-pakistans-national-security/.

^{34.} Wasif. "Impact of India's Hybrid Warfare."

ing filmmakers' creative freedom.³⁵ This influence on the film industry not only shapes public perception in favor of nationalist narratives but also limits the diversity of artistic expression within Indian cinema.

The impact of Indian films on Pakistan's national security is significant, as these films can have psychological effects and a potential for radicalization.³⁶ Indian films often portray Pakistanis negatively, as seen in movies like "Phantom" and "Baby," which foster anti-Pakistan sentiments and contribute to radicalization. Films such as "Uri: The Surgical Strike" and "Raazi" reinforce border tensions by presenting Pakistan as a persistent threat, thereby undermining cultural understanding and peace efforts. This negative depiction in popular media exacerbates existing hostilities and hampers diplomatic and peace-building initiatives between the two nations.

Bollywood's glorification of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has overshadowed even the Indian Army, as exemplified by an anti-Pakistan movie that distorts reality to depict a fabricated surgical strike as a victory. This film aims to enhance Modi's image and promote the ruling government's agenda, presenting a skewed narrative that aligns with political objectives rather than factual events.³⁷

^{35.} Mukherjee, Tatsam. "'Setback for Artistic Freedom' As India Scraps Film Tribunal." Al Jazeera, April 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/9/bollywood-anxious-as-india-abolishes-film-certification-tribunal.

^{36.} Asif, Fariha, and Jagmohan Sangha. "Film as a Significant Factor in Fostering Peace and Justice in Society." Journal of Political Sciences and Public Affairs, July 2022. file:///C:/Users/Apple%20computer/Downloads/film-as-a-significant-factor-in-fostering-peace-and-justice-in-society.pdf.

^{37. &}quot;RAW Behind Production of Anti-Pakistan Films in Bollywood: Report." Radio Pakistan, April 2023. https://www.radio.gov.pk/18-04-2023/raw-provides-

This portrayal not only serves to elevate Modi's status but also propagates the government's ideological stance, further influencing public perception and nationalistic sentiments.

Conclusion

The Modi government's influence on the Indian media has significant implications for Pakistan's national security. The exploitation of cinema for propaganda purposes, the cultural invasion by Indian films, and the weaponization of entertainment have collectively contributed to a climate of hostility that undermines Pakistan's security. Indian films, used as tools of hybrid warfare, exert a profound psychological impact, perpetuating border tensions and eroding social and cultural values. This deliberate use of media to shape perceptions and foster animosity poses considerable challenges to Pakistan's security landscape, complicating efforts to achieve regional stability and peace.

Indian films and media coverage extend beyond national borders, significantly influencing international perceptions and regional stability while straining bilateral relations. These portrayals often lack objectivity, distorting Pakistan's role in regional security dynamics. Events such as the FATF's grey listing of Pakistan in the recent past and the Pulwama or Uri terrorist attacks exemplify how Indian media propagates negative stereotypes, fostering anti-Pakistan sentiments on a global scale. This biased coverage not only exacerbates diplomatic tensions but also undermines efforts toward regional peace and cooperation by perpetuating a one-sided narrative that impacts global per-

all-kind-of-resources-to-bollywood-for-making-anti-pakistan-movies-repots.

ceptions of Pakistan.

In the context of hybrid warfare, India has effectively employed coherent and persuasive narratives to shape public opinion to gain a strategic advantage. Through compelling storytelling, Indian media has influenced and constructed specific perceptions beyond realities against Pakistan. By utilizing emotional appeals, persuasive rhetoric, and cinematic techniques, Indian media portrays India's perspective as righteous and justified, while depicting Pakistan as the aggressor or a source of instability. This strategic use of media shapes both domestic and international perceptions, bolstering India's geopolitical position and reinforcing negative stereotypes about Pakistan.

4

Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technologies and National Security of Pakistan



Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technologies and National Security of Pakistan

Mirza Abdul Aleem Baig¹

Pakistan's security landscape is shaped by its unique geopolitical positioning and historical challenges, which influence its defense policies and military strategies. The country faces a range of security challenges that include terrorism and militancy, border tensions with neighboring countries, and the militarization of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Integrating AI-led systems in national security frameworks is pivotal for Pakistan to reinforce its defense capabilities. AI, on the one hand, offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance military effectiveness and gain strategic advantage against any threats while on the other hand, its integration into national defense policy also raises ethical and security considerations. Thus, the study explores the diverse benefits for Pakistan resulting from AI adoption, including operational efficiency, rapid response to emerging threats, and cost-effectiveness. More so, acknowledging the inherent challenges, such as security risks, bias, and privacy concerns, that accompany the integra-

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tion of AI into national security frameworks, the study also considers ethical dimensions and aspects. It seeks to provide insights for informed strategic decision-making to safeguard national interests in an ever-changing global security environment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, National Security, Defense Capabilities, Informed Strategic Decision-Making.

Introduction

Pakistan's security landscape is influenced by its unique geopolitical positioning and complex regional environment. Situated in a volatile region, Pakistan is bordered by India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China, each presenting distinct opportunities, security challenges, and strategic considerations. Consequently, this strategic positioning necessitates a robust and adaptable defense framework capable of addressing a range of threats spectrum, including conventional military threats, asymmetrical warfare, and challenges posed by the militarization of AI.

In addition, terrorism and militancy have long plagued Pakistan, with various extremist groups, sponsored by India, operating within and across its borders.² Other than this, the longstanding Kashmir issue with India remains a central concern, contributing to periodic tensions and conflicts in the region. Another destabilizing factor is the Afghan conflict which has implications for Pakistan's security, influencing its efforts to manage border regions and refugee populations.³ The evolving landscape of cyber threats poses additional challenges, prompting Pakistan to actively

^{2.} Abadin, Zain Ul, Sundas Naqeeb Khan, Samra Urooj Khan, Aminah Ali, Qudsia Shabbir, Arfeeen Zahra, Zain Ishtiaq, and Arsalan Asif. "The Alteration of Dynamics Security Threats in Pakistan: A Survey." Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 4, no. 1 (2023): 60-75.

^{3 .} Nicolson, Simone. "India-Pakistan Conflict: The Dispute over the Kashmir-Jammu Border." Pepperdine Policy Review 14, no. 1 (2022): 1.

work on enhancing its cybersecurity.⁴ On the other hand, internal stability, social cohesion, and effective governance are crucial elements in safeguarding national security. Although Pakistan has implemented a comprehensive security mechanism to deal with existing challenges,⁵ nevertheless, national security is a dynamic issue that necessitates an all-encompassing approach.

Given these challenges, AI has the potential to significantly enhance the national security apparatus of Pakistan, offering innovative solutions to address the above-highlighted issues. Notably, AI stands at the forefront of transformative technologies, exerting a profound influence across diverse sectors, with its impact on national economics and security being especially remarkable. In the contemporary geopolitical landscape marked by dynamic shifts, states are recognizing the imperative of integrating AI into their defense mechanisms. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between AI and national security is a central point of discussion in this article. It examines the multifaceted applications of AI, elucidating how it enhances defense capabilities in areas such as cybersecurity, surveillance, reconnaissance, threat detection, and decision support systems.

Additionally, the study explores the diverse benefits derived from AI adoption, including operational efficiency, rapid response to emerging threats, and cost-effectiveness. However, acknowledging the inherent challenges, such as security risks, bias, and privacy concerns, that accompany the integration of AI into national security frameworks, the study also considers ethical concerns. Ethical considerations surrounding the development and use of AI-driven technologies, particularly in the context of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), further highlight the

^{4.} Shad, Muhammad Riaz. "Cyber Threat Landscape and Readiness Challenge of Pakistan." Strategic Studies 39, no. 1 (2019): 1-19.

^{5.} Bowers, Jefferson, Michael Ellinger, Tas Islam, and Eric Noland. "Artificial Intelligence and Lethal Autonomous Weapons: A Policy Recommendation." (2020).

need for a nuanced and responsible approach. As nations navigate this evolving landscape, careful consideration of the interplay between AI's capabilities and the ethical dimensions becomes pivotal in harnessing its potential for national defense.

Pakistan's Security Challenges and Threat Perceptions

Pakistan's security landscape is a complex matrix of internal and external challenges that demand a nuanced and comprehensive analysis. The multifaceted nature of these threats necessitates a detailed examination of the factors influencing national security, both from within and beyond its borders.

Internal threats are multilayered, encompassing extremism, terrorism, sectarian violence, and the growing influence of militant groups. Various militant groups have orchestrated numerous attacks, targeting civilians, security forces, and infrastructure. For example, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been responsible for several high-profile attacks, including the 2014 Peshawar school massacre, where over 140 people, mostly children, were killed.⁶ This tragic incident highlighted the severe threat posed by extremist groups to Pakistan's internal security. The growing influence of militant groups in various regions presents a significant challenge to state authority and governance. Moreover, the ideological propagation of extremist views fosters an environment conducive to radicalization, undermining social cohesion and national security. Consequently, these issues undermine Pakistan's internal stability and complicate efforts to maintain internal peace.

Sectarian violence is another significant internal threat. Shia communities have been frequent targets of bombings and shootings by Sunni extremist groups such as Lash-

^{6. &}quot;Pakistan Taliban: Peshawar School Attack Leaves 141 Dead." BBC News, December 16, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30491435.

kar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). The 2013 Quetta bombings, where twin blasts killed over 100 people in a predominantly Shia neighborhood, exemplify the devastating impact of sectarian violence on social cohesion and national security.⁷

In addition to this, violent non-state actors, often supported by external state actors i.e., India, challenge Pakistan's sovereignty and internal stability. For instance, various militant groups operate as Indian proxies within Pakistan's borders, contributing to instability and violence. A notable example is the case of Kulbushan Jadhav, an Indian national and operative of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency. Jadhav was arrested by Pakistani authorities in March 2016 in the Balochistan province. As per the available evidence, Jadhav was involved in espionage and sabotage activities aimed at destabilizing the region.⁸ Jadhav entered Pakistan illegally via Iran and was orchestrating efforts to support separatist movements in Balochistan. The province has been a hotbed of insurgency, with various groups demanding greater autonomy or independence from Pakistan. Jadhav's activities included funding and training these militant groups, planning terrorist attacks, and disrupting key infrastructure projects, including those related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Furthermore, the longstanding tension between Pakistan and India remains a significant concern, primarily centered around the Kashmir conflict. This territorial dispute has been the epicenter of multiple wars and continues to be a flashpoint for periodic skirmishes and escalations. The military standoff and cross-border shelling pose a direct threat to Pakistan's national security, often resulting in ci-

^{7. &}quot;Pakistan: Dozens dead in bomb attack on Quetta market." February 17, 2013. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21466120

^{8.} Khalid, Amna, and Bakri Mat. "India's Hybrid Warfare in Balochistan: Challenges and Way Forward For Pakistan." The Journal of Defence and Security 18, no. 1 (2023): 43-II.

vilian casualties and displacement, exacerbating humanitarian issues in the region. Additionally, India's growing military capabilities and modernization efforts, including advancements in missile technology, cyber warfare, and surveillance, amplify the security dilemma for Pakistan, compelling it to enhance its defense posture continuously. These technological advancements are part of India's long-term ambitions and military modernization program that includes the development of autonomous systems and AI-powered offensive and defensive mechanisms.⁹

The situation in Afghanistan presents another layer of external security challenges. The leaky border between Pakistan and Afghanistan facilitates the movement of militant groups, contributing to cross-border terrorism and insurgency. The Taliban's resurgence and control over significant parts of Afghanistan have direct implications for Pakistan's security environment. Militant groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) exploit these conditions to launch attacks within Pakistan, destabilizing border regions. Besides, the refugee influx from Afghanistan adds to the complexity of Pakistan's security scenario. The presence of Afghan refugees, while a humanitarian concern, also poses security risks as militant and other non-state elements infiltrate refugee populations.¹⁰

Likewise, Pakistan's geostrategic location and the CPEC, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), have heightened Pakistan's threat perception. CPEC's significance has made it a target for both internal and external threats, further complicating Pakistan's security land-scape. The project holds economic importance and strate-

^{9.} Choudhary, Ladhu R. "India's Military Modernization Efforts Under Prime Minister Modi." Stimson Center, May 22, 2024. https://www.stimson.org/2024/indias-military-modernization-efforts-under-prime-minister-modi/

^{10.} Khan, Muhammad Fahim, Asad Hassan, and Aamer Raza. "Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan: Changing global dynamics and Pakistan's policy choices." Asian Journal of Comparative Politics 8, no. 2 (2023): 516-528.

gic value, drawing attention from adversarial entities. For instance, in 2019, the attack on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar, a key location in the CPEC project, was claimed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) - a terrorist organization supported by India, which opposes the development and has carried out several attacks aimed at disrupting CPEC activities. Similarly, the 2020 attack on the Karachi Stock Exchange, attributed to the BLA, was also seen as an attempt to undermine economic stability and investor confidence in Pakistan, indirectly targeting CPEC's economic benefits. While the strategic corridor enhances Pakistan's connectivity with China, it also exposes the region to threats from those who oppose this development. In sum, this increased connectivity has been exploited by Indian-sponsored terrorists and militants who see CPEC as a threat to their interests or an opportunity for sabotage, as evidenced by various intelligence reports indicating the presence of hostile elements planning attacks on CPEC infrastructure.¹¹

Additionally, the emergence of AI-led technologies introduces new dimensions to Pakistan's threat perception. These technologies can be exploited by adversaries to conduct sophisticated cyber-attacks, manipulate information, and disrupt critical infrastructure, posing significant risks to Pakistan's national security. For instance, in 2018, a cyber-attack targeted Pakistan's banking system, compromising the data of numerous customers and leading to fraudulent transactions. This incident underscored the vulnerability of critical financial infrastructure to cyber threats and prompted efforts to enhance cybersecurity measures within the banking sector. Beyond financial

^{11.} Al-Saba, Ms Kokab, Noor Fatima, and Masood Ur Rehman Khattak. "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications." Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition 19, no. 07 (2023).

^{12 .} Shakeel, Qarar. "'Almost all' Pakistani banks hacked in security breach, says FIA cybercrime head." Dawn, November 6, 2018. https://www.dawn.com/news/1443970

systems, AI-related threats extend to military applications, espionage, and autonomous weapons systems. Historically, the increasing use of AI in cyber-attacks has highlighted the evolving nature of these threats.

States Consideration for Integration of AI into National Security Mechanisms

In recent years, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into national security mechanisms has emerged as a critical focus for states globally. This paradigm shift is driven by the transformative potential of AI to significantly enhance security, defense, and intelligence operations. By incorporating AI technologies, countries can address multifaceted threats with greater efficacy. The strategic adoption of AI facilitates the streamlining of operations, the improvement of decision-making processes, and the provision of a competitive edge over adversaries. Several nations, including the US, China, Israel, the United Kingdom, and France, are at the forefront of this integration, leveraging AI to fortify their national security frameworks and advance their strategic interests.

In addition, AI standing at the forefront of technological innovation, garners widespread attention from commercial investors, defense intellectuals, policymakers, and international competitors alike. Recent initiatives underscore the global significance attributed to AI development, with various nations vying for leadership in this rapidly evolving field. For example, on July 20, 2017, the Chinese government unveiled a comprehensive strategy aimed at positioning itself as a global leader in AI by 2030. This ambitious plan reflects China's determination to assert dominance in AI technology and capitalize on its transformative potential across diverse sectors.

^{13.} Mozur, Paul. "Beijing Wants A.I. to Be Made in China by 2030." The New York Times, July 20, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/20/business/china-artificial-intelligence.html

Similarly, Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, has publicly declared its intention to pursue AI technologies, with Putin asserting that mastery of AI would confer global influence and power. In the US, AI has emerged as a strategic priority, with the National Defense Strategy (NDS), released in January 2018, identifying AI as a critical technology essential for ensuring military supremacy in future conflicts. Consequently, the US military has already embarked on integrating AI systems into combat operations through initiatives such as Project Maven. This spearhead initiative leverages AI algorithms to enhance situational awareness and identify insurgent targets in conflict zones like Iraq and Syria, underlining the tangible impact of AI on contemporary warfare.

Additionally, Israel is renowned for its integration of AI in cybersecurity and defense. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) use advanced algorithms to anticipate and neutralize potential cyber threats. Unit 8200, Israel's cyber intelligence unit, leverages AI for cyber defense, intelligence gathering, and counter-cyber operations. This has made Israel a global leader in cybersecurity, protecting critical infrastructure and national security assets from sophisticated cyber-attacks. Moreover, in the case of the UK, it has invested significantly in autonomous defense technologies. Projects like the Taranis drone, which employs AI to perform autonomous reconnaissance and strike missions, demonstrate the UK's commitment to leveraging AI for national security. These autonomous systems enhance op-

^{14.} Vincent, James. "Putin says the nation that leads in AI 'will be the ruler of the world." The Verge, September 4, 2017. https://www.theverge.com/2017/9/4/16251226/russia-ai-putin-rule-the-world

^{15.} Clark, Joseph. "DOD Releases AI Adoption Strategy." US Department of Defense, November 2, 2023. https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3578219/dod-releases-ai-adoption-strategy/

^{16.} Sayler, Kelley M. "Artificial Intelligence and National Security." Congressional Research Service 45178, 2020.

^{17.} Bob, Yonah Jeremy. "Israel's cyber advantage over Iran mixed with other abilities - interview with ex-cyber chief." The Jerusalem Post, July 6, 2022. https://www.jpost.com/business-and-innovation/all-news/article-711376

erational efficiency, reduce human risk, and provide strategic advantages on the battlefield. Additionally, the UK is exploring AI applications in predictive analytics for threat assessment and decision-making processes.¹⁸

In addition to this, France employs AI in its counter-terrorism efforts, utilizing natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to monitor and analyze online extremist content. French intelligence agencies use AI to track and prevent terrorist activities by identifying suspicious communication patterns and networks. This proactive approach has enhanced France's ability to thwart potential terrorist attacks before they materialize, thereby bolstering national security.

Given this, it can be argued that the dynamic nature of AI has led to the emergence of transformative applications with significant utility for stakeholders in the sphere of national security, spanning military operations, intelligence agencies, and policy-making communities. The multifaceted capabilities of AI hold immense promise for enhancing national security efforts across diverse domains. In the military sphere, AI-driven technologies have revolutionized warfare strategies, offering solutions for predictive analytics, autonomous systems, and enhanced situational awareness. For instance, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with AI algorithms for target recognition and predictive analytics aiding in threat assessment have become integral to modern military operations, augmenting combat effectiveness and reducing human risk.

^{18. &}quot;United Kingdom uses AI to improve drone defense capabilities of armed forces." Army Recognition, March 12, 2024. https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2024/united-kingdom-uses-ai-to-improve-drone-defense-capabilities-of-armed-forces

^{19.} Barnet, Balinda, and Christine Agius. "Can violent extremist content online be eliminated?" Lowy Institute, May 27, 2021. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/can-violent-extremist-content-online-be-eliminated

Similarly, intelligence agencies worldwide leverage AI-powered tools for data analysis, pattern recognition, and threat detection, facilitating the extraction of actionable insights from vast volumes of information. AI-driven algorithms enable the identification of anomalous activities, predictive modeling of adversarial behavior, and the detection of potential security threats in real time, thereby enhancing the efficacy of intelligence gathering and analysis.²⁰

Additionally, AI plays a pivotal role in informing policy-making processes related to national security by providing decision-makers with data-driven insights and scenario analysis. Advanced AI algorithms enable the simulation of various policy scenarios, forecasting potential outcomes, and assessing their implications on national security objectives. By leveraging AI-powered predictive modeling and simulation tools, policymakers can formulate more informed and adaptive strategies to address evolving security challenges and geopolitical dynamics.

Benefits of Integrating AI into Pakistan's National Security Framework

The integration of AI into Pakistan's national security framework offers numerous benefits, enhancing decision-making, threat detection, and response capabilities. By leveraging AI tools for intelligence gathering, data analysis, surveillance, predictive modeling, and automated responses, Pakistan can address complex security challenges more effectively than traditional methods. AI enhances border surveillance and predictive analytics, preempting cross-border infiltrations and forecasting potential escalations, especially concerning threats from India. Relating to Afghanistan, AI can improve border management and support counter-insurgency operations by tracking insurgent movements and analyzing terrorist networks.

^{20.} Sindiramutty, S.R. "Autonomous Threat Hunting: A Future Paradigm for AI-Driven Threat Intelligence." arXiv preprint arXiv:2401.00286, 2023.

Internally, AI bolsters efforts against extremism and terrorism through advanced data analysis and threat detection, aiding in the identification and disruption of terrorist activities. It also helps monitor and prevent sectarian violence by analyzing data to predict flashpoints and recommend preventive measures. Besides, AI can map the organizational structures of militant groups, enhancing efforts to dismantle these networks and deploy cybersecurity measures to counter digital threats.²¹ By integrating AI into its security framework, Pakistan can significantly enhance its surveillance, intelligence, border management, and counter-terrorism efforts, ensuring a proactive and adaptive approach to emerging threats.

Through AI, Pakistan can improve the efficiency and speed of responses to security incidents, positively impacting human security and minimizing civilian damages. Institutions equipped with AI-driven systems can operate more effectively and at a lower cost, reducing errors in data management, surveillance, and other critical activities.

To comprehensively address future security threats, this research proposes incorporating AI into the core of Pakistan's national security domain and expanding its application to non-traditional security areas. This approach will enhance defense capabilities through AI-driven security measures, including surveillance, threat detection, and border security to prevent infiltrations and attacks. AI can project potential security scenarios and develop proactive strategies to address them, including strategic planning and resource allocation to ensure that security measures are effectively targeted. Finally, it highlights the importance of utilizing AI to provide early warnings and predictive analytics. AI can analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns and

^{21 .} Khan, Fahad Ali, Gang Li, Anam Nawaz Khan, Qazi Waqas Khan, Myriam Hadjouni, and Hela Elmannai. "AI-Driven Counter-Terrorism: Enhancing Global Security Through Advanced Predictive Analytics." IEEE Access 11 (2023): 135864-135879.

predict future threats, allowing security forces to take preventive measures.²² Pakistan can navigate and deal with the following core areas through AI-led expertise.

Dealing with Terrorism

Given that Pakistan is one of the countries most affected by terrorism, AI-based surveillance systems can play a pivotal role in reducing perceived threats and enhancing overall security. Firstly, AI-driven surveillance systems equipped with facial recognition and behavioral analysis can be deployed in high-risk zones to monitor and identify suspicious activities in real time. Integrating AI with CCTV networks can enhance the ability to detect anomalies and flag potential threats, allowing security forces to respond promptly.

In counter-terrorism operations, AI-led systems can assist national institutions by analyzing large datasets from various sources, such as social media, communications, and financial transactions, to identify patterns indicative of terrorist planning and activity. Machine Learning (ML) algorithms can be trained to recognize these patterns and predict potential attacks, providing actionable intelligence to law enforcement and military agencies. To further enhance accuracy and reduce response time, AI can be used to develop predictive analytics models that assess the likelihood of terrorist incidents based on historical data and current intelligence inputs. These models can inform strategic planning and resource allocation, ensuring that security efforts are concentrated where they are most needed.

AI can also play a crucial role in border security by monitoring cross-border movements and identifying illegal ac-

²². Fayyaz, Shabana, Nabeel Hussain, and Hafsa Andleeb. "Artificial Intelligence, Pakistan's National Security Policy: International Humanitarian Law (IHL)."

^{23 .} Gaire, Utsav Sharma. "Application of Artificial Intelligence in the Military: An Overview." Unity Journal 4, no. 01 (2023): 161-174.

tivities. For instance, drones equipped with AI technology can patrol border areas, using image recognition and sensor data to detect and track unauthorized crossings, suspicious movements, and smuggling operations. This can significantly enhance the effectiveness of border management and reduce infiltration by terrorist elements.²⁴

To address the internal threat of extremism, AI tools can be employed to monitor online platforms for extremist content and propaganda. Natural language processing algorithms can analyze and flag content that promotes radicalization, enabling authorities to take preventive measures and counter-narrative strategies.

Addressing Cyber Threats

In the ever-evolving landscape of digital threats, AI emerges as a cornerstone in the fortification of cybersecurity measures. The crucial role that AI plays in this domain is emphasized by its ability to detect and respond to cyber threats in real time, presenting a proactive defense against sophisticated and constantly evolving attack vectors. Unlike traditional security systems, AI possesses the capability to identify subtle patterns and anomalies that may elude human observation or conventional security mechanisms.²⁵

Consequently, this heightened level of threat detection enables a swifter response to potential breaches and facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the complex tactics employed by cyber adversaries. Furthermore, AI-powered systems contribute significantly to enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure, offering a robust defense against

^{24.} Dokoro, Haruna Ahmed, Ibrahim Hassan, Muhammad Yahaya Yarda, and Mustapha Umar. "Exploring the Technological Advancement in Drone Technology for Surveillance." Gombe State Polytechnic Bajoga, Journal of Science and Technology 1, no. 1 (2024): 78-85.

^{25 .} AL-Khassawneh, Y.A. "A Review of Artificial Intelligence in Security and Privacy: Research Advances, Applications, Opportunities, and Challenges." Indonesian Journal of Science and Technology 8, no. 1 (2023): 79-96.

cyber-attacks that target vital sectors. By continuously learning and adapting to emerging threats, AI establishes a dynamic and adaptive cybersecurity framework, fortifying the digital frontiers and safeguarding sensitive information and systems from malicious incursions. As technology continues to advance, the integration of AI in cybersecurity becomes not just a necessity but a strategic imperative in safeguarding the integrity and functionality of critical digital infrastructures.

In Pakistan's case, it has implemented various cybersecurity measures in response to cybersecurity threats. These include strengthening IT infrastructure, enhancing public-private partnerships, and investing in advanced cybersecurity technologies. Looking ahead, Pakistan needs to develop comprehensive strategies to prepare for future AI threats. This includes investing in research and development, formulating robust policies, and enhancing international cooperation. Participating in global cybersecurity initiatives and collaborating with other nations and international organizations will be crucial in addressing the transnational nature of AI threats.

Moreover, the policy and regulatory framework governing AI and cybersecurity needs to be robust and adaptive. Existing laws and regulations should be reviewed and updated to keep pace with technological advancements. Regulatory bodies must play an active role in ensuring compliance and fostering a secure digital environment.

Surveillance and Reconnaissance

The integration of AI has ushered in a new era for surveillance and reconnaissance systems, elevating their sophistication and efficiency. Advanced algorithms, capable of processing vast amounts of data from diverse sources, including satellites, drones, and sensors, form the backbone of this transformative technology. As a result, this

integration enables the provision of real-time intelligence to military and security forces, fostering an unprecedented level of situational awareness. The ability to swiftly analyze and interpret information from multiple platforms enhances the speed of response and contributes significantly to the accuracy and depth of the insights gained. In turn, this enriched situational awareness becomes a cornerstone in strategic decision-making processes for defense and security operations. AI-driven surveillance not only complements human capabilities but surpasses them by efficiently handling immense datasets, identifying patterns, and providing actionable intelligence. The result is a paradigm shift in the efficiency and effectiveness of surveillance and reconnaissance, empowering military and security forces to navigate complex scenarios with heightened precision and agility.

AI-led Autonomous Systems

The deployment of autonomous systems, particularly UAVs and unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), fortified by AI, marks a transformative leap in the domain of information gathering and mission execution.²⁶ The integration of AI endows these autonomous systems with the capability to operate independently, reducing the necessity to expose human lives to direct risks in various operational scenarios. UAVs and UGVs, equipped with advanced AI algorithms, showcase unparalleled efficiency in tasks such as reconnaissance, border patrolling, and search and rescue operations.²⁷

By leveraging AI, these autonomous systems exhibit the capacity to navigate and adapt to complex environments,

^{26 .} Serôdio, C., et al. "The 6G Ecosystem as Support for IoE and Private Networks: Vision, Requirements, and Challenges." Future Internet 15, no. 11 (2023): 348.

²⁷ . Tong, Y., H. Liu, and Z. Zhang. "Advancements in Humanoid Robots: A Comprehensive Review and Future Prospects." <code>IEEE/CAA Journal</code> of Automatica Sinica 11, no. 2 (2024): 301-328.

analyze real-time data, and make informed decisions autonomously. Resultantly, this not only enhances the speed and precision of mission execution but also extends the operational reach of defense and security forces. The deployment of AI-powered autonomous systems represents a significant step toward minimizing human exposure to potential hazards while maximizing the effectiveness of critical missions, demonstrating the profound impact of technology on modern defense capabilities.

Data Analytics

AI algorithms play a pivotal role in the domain of national security by harnessing the power of data analysis to identify potential threats and predict security risks with unprecedented accuracy. Through the application of advanced ML models, these algorithms adeptly sift through vast datasets, recognizing complex patterns that serve as indicators of various security concerns, including potential terrorist activities and other security breaches.

The capability of AI to process massive amounts of information, often in real time, allows for a proactive approach to identifying and mitigating potential threats before they escalate. By continuously learning and adapting to evolving patterns, AI-driven systems provide security forces with a dynamic and robust tool for staying ahead of emerging challenges. Consequently, this predictive capacity enhances the effectiveness of threat detection and empowers security agencies to formulate pre-emptive strategies, contributing significantly to the overall resilience of national security frameworks.²⁸ In essence, the integration of AI algorithms in data analysis serves as a force multiplier, providing invaluable insights and foresight in safeguarding against diverse and evolving security threats.

^{28.} Rangaraju, S. "Secure by Intelligence: Enhancing Products with AI-Driven Security Measures." EPH-International Journal of Science and Engineering 9, no. 3 (2023): 36-41.

Decision Support Systems

AI-driven decision support systems represent a cornerstone in strengthening the decision-making capabilities of military and government leaders, offering a transformative approach to handling complex scenarios. By harnessing the capabilities of AI, these systems excel in processing intricate and voluminous datasets, extracting meaningful insights into geopolitical developments, potential conflicts, and optimal courses of action.²⁹

The integration of AI ensures that decision-makers are equipped with a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of multifaceted situations, allowing for more informed and timely responses. Resultantly, these systems not only analyze historical data but also adapt to real-time changes, providing decision-makers with a nuanced perspective on evolving circumstances. The result is a strategic advantage in navigating the complexities of national security, as AI-driven decision support systems enable leaders to anticipate challenges, formulate effective responses, and ultimately enhance the overall resilience and agility of military and government strategies.³⁰

Law Enforcement

In the domain of law enforcement, AI-driven facial recognition technology emerges as a transformative tool for the swift and accurate identification of suspects. Powered by AI algorithms, facial recognition systems are adept at rapidly comparing faces against watchlists in real time, facilitating the expedited apprehension of individuals of interest. Furthermore, AI algorithms are leveraged to predict criminal hotspots, enabling law enforcement agencies to strategically allocate resources and optimize patrol routes

^{29 .} Saltini, A. "AI and Nuclear Command, Control and Communications: P5 Perspectives." 2023.

^{30.} Pfaff, C.A., et al. Trusting AI: Integrating Artificial Intelligence into the Army's Professional Expert Knowledge. USAWC Press, 2023.

based on spatial crime data.³¹ By utilizing the predictive capabilities of AI, law enforcement agencies can enhance their proactive measures against criminal activities and strengthen public safety initiatives.

Defensive Operations

AI has emerged as a disruptive force in defense operations, revolutionizing traditional practices and unlocking new avenues for efficiency and effectiveness across various domains. AI catalyzes streamlining defense processes by automating routine tasks, thereby liberating human personnel from mundane responsibilities. By leveraging AI-powered systems, defense agencies can offload repetitive tasks such as data analysis, administrative functions, and logistical operations.³² This liberation enables personnel to redirect their focus toward strategic and complex activities that demand critical thinking and decision-making skills. Rather than being bogged down by manual tasks, human personnel can now devote their cognitive abilities to areas such as strategic planning, threat assessment, and policy formulation, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of defense operations.

Rapid Response system to rising threats

One of the prominent features of AI in defense operations is its ability to provide swift responses to emerging threats, thereby reducing the time required to detect and counter potential security risks. Traditional defense mechanisms often rely on manual processes and reactive approaches, which may lead to delays in threat identification and response. However, AI-powered systems excel in real-time data analysis, pattern recognition, and predictive model-

^{31 .} Abhay, D. A., S. Akash, K. Ashwin, Aneesh G. Shenoy, and Prafullata K. Auradkar. "Smart Policing: Using Geospatial Crime Data to Plan Patrol Routes." In 2023 4th International Conference for Emerging Technology (INCET), pp. 1-7. IEEE, 2023.

^{32.} Moy, G., et al. Recent Advances in Artificial Intelligence and Their Impact on Defence. 2020.

ing, enabling defense agencies to proactively identify and mitigate security threats before they escalate. Whether it's cyber-attacks, unconventional warfare tactics, or geopolitical instabilities, AI-driven defense systems offer unparalleled responsiveness, thereby safeguarding national security interests and maintaining a proactive defense posture.³³

Cost-effective solutions

Beyond enhancing responsiveness, AI technologies contribute to significant cost savings in terms of manpower and resource utilization within defense operations. By automating and optimizing processes, AI-driven systems minimize inefficiencies, reduce operational overheads, and maximize the allocation of limited resources. For instance, AI algorithms can analyze vast datasets to identify areas of resource wastage, streamline supply chain logistics, and optimize maintenance schedules for military equipment. This not only results in tangible cost savings but also enhances the overall operational efficiency of defense agencies, enabling them to achieve more with fewer resources.

Ethical Considerations

The proliferation of AI in defense raises complex questions that have garnered significant attention in congressional hearings and policy debates. Among these inquiries is the exploration of diverse military applications of AI and the corresponding ethical and legal considerations. Congressional deliberations have examined potential regulations governing the deployment of AI in military contexts, balancing technological innovation with the need to safeguard against unintended consequences and ethical dilemmas.³⁵

^{33.} Pulyala, S.R. "From Detection to Prediction: AI-Powered SIEM for Proactive Threat Hunting and Risk Mitigation." Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT) 15, no. 1 (2024): 34-43.

^{34.} Mohite, R., et al. "Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Project Management for Efficient Resource Allocation." International Journal of Intelligent Systems and Applications in Engineering 12, no. 4s (2024): 420-431.

^{35.} Korteling, JE, Gillian C van de Boer-Visschedijk, Romy AM Blankendaal,

AI-driven technologies promise enhanced decision-making, operational efficiency, and force multiplication, enabling military forces to adapt to dynamic and asymmetric threats. However, reliance on AI also entails inherent risks, including algorithmic bias, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the potential for autonomous systems to escalate conflicts beyond human control. These risks necessitate a thorough examination of the ethical implications of AI-enabled warfare, particularly regarding accountability, proportionality, and the preservation of human agency in decision-making processes. However, and force multiplication, enabled warfare, particularly regarding accountability, proportionality, and the preservation of human agency in decision-making processes.

The integration of AI into national security strategies brings both unprecedented opportunities and challenges. As nations navigate this complex landscape, it is crucial to strike a balance between utilizing the benefits of AI for defense and addressing the ethical, legal, and security concerns associated with its implementation. With careful consideration and responsible deployment, AI can significantly enhance the effectiveness of national security efforts, providing a strategic advantage in an ever-evolving geopolitical landscape.

As Pakistan embraces the integration of AI into its national security framework, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive and nuanced approach to addressing ethical considerations, data privacy concerns, and potential biases in algorithms. The deployment of AI technologies in the domain of national security represents a significant leap forward, offering unparalleled capabilities to enhance situational awareness, optimize operational efficiency, and respond effectively to emerging threats. However, the responsible

Rudy C Boonekamp, and Aletta R Eikelboom. "Human-Versus Artificial Intelligence." Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence 4 (2021): 622364.

^{36 .} Lucarelli, Sonia, Alessandro Marrone, and Francesco N. Moro. "NATO Decision-Making in the Age of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence." NATO HQ—Boulevard Leopold III (2021).

^{37. &}quot;Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Project Management for Efficient Resource Allocation."

integration of AI necessitates careful examination and mitigation of various ethical and privacy-related challenges.

Firstly, the ethical use of AI in surveillance, decision-making processes, and autonomous systems requires thoughtful deliberation. Therefore, Pakistan must establish clear ethical guidelines and principles to govern the development, deployment, and utilization of AI in national security operations. These guidelines should prioritize human rights, accountability, and transparency, ensuring that AI-driven systems are deployed in a manner consistent with democratic values and legal frameworks.

Secondly, data privacy concerns emerge as a central issue in the implementation of AI in national security. The collection, processing, and storage of vast amounts of sensitive data raise questions about individual privacy rights and data protection. Consequently, Pakistan must enact robust data privacy laws and regulations to safeguard citizens' privacy rights while enabling the effective use of AI technologies for security purposes. This entails establishing stringent protocols for data anonymization, encryption, and access control, as well as mechanisms for obtaining informed consent and ensuring data transparency and accountability.

Moreover, the potential biases inherent in AI algorithms pose a significant challenge to the equitable and fair deployment of AI in national security operations. Biased algorithms can perpetuate discrimination, exacerbate societal inequalities, and undermine the legitimacy of AI-driven decision-making processes.³⁸ Hence, Pakistan must prioritize algorithmic fairness and bias mitigation strategies to ensure that AI systems operate impartially and equitably.

^{38.} Nosike, Chukwunonso Joseph, Oluchukwu Sandra Nosike Ojobor, and Uju Cynthia Nosike. "Exploring the Ethical and Societal Implications of Artificial Intelligence." Multidisciplinary Journal of Management and Social Sciences 1, no. 1 (2024).

This may involve comprehensive auditing and validation processes, algorithmic transparency measures, and ongoing monitoring to detect and address biases as they arise.

Despite the promise that the integration of AI holds for enhancing Pakistan's national security capabilities, it also presents complex ethical, privacy, and bias-related challenges that must be addressed with diligence and foresight. By establishing clear ethical frameworks, robust data privacy regulations, and bias mitigation strategies, Pakistan can harness the transformative power of AI to strengthen its defense posture, protect the rights of its citizens, and navigate the evolving security landscape with integrity and accountability. The responsible integration of AI into national security operations is essential not only for safeguarding democratic values and human rights but also for ensuring the long-term security and stability of the nation.

Implementation Mechanism

To effectively integrate AI into its national security framework, Pakistan should consider a multifaceted approach. First, establishing a National Artificial Intelligence Commission is crucial. This body would oversee the formulation of a comprehensive national strategy with clear objectives, milestones, and metrics for incorporating AI and machine learning technologies across both military and commercial sectors. Second, the government must prioritize budgetary allocations and mobilize funds strategically, focusing on areas that offer sustainable advantages and mitigate key risks in the national security context. Third, fostering inter-agency collaboration is essential, including identifying AI and AI-driven applications that should be restricted through international treaties to ensure compliance with global standards and prevent misuse. Fourth, relevant institutions should conduct AI-focused war games and simulated exercises to identify potential disruptive military innovations and assess their impacts. Lastly, developing a skilled human resource pool is vital. Training programs and educational initiatives should be established to equip personnel with the necessary skills to innovate and integrate AI technologies into national security operations. By adopting these recommendations, Pakistan can enhance its defense capabilities and address ethical, legal, and security concerns associated with AI, ensuring a balanced and effective deployment of these advanced technologies.

Conclusion

Integrating AI into Pakistan's national security framework offers numerous benefits, enhancing decision-making, threat detection, and response capabilities. Leveraging AI tools for intelligence gathering, data analysis, surveillance, predictive modeling, and automated responses enables Pakistan to address complex security challenges more effectively than traditional methods. AI enhances border surveillance and predictive analytics, preempting cross-border infiltrations and forecasting potential escalations, especially concerning threats from India. Concerning Afghanistan, AI improves border management and supports counter-insurgency operations by tracking insurgent movements and analyzing terrorist networks. Internally, AI bolsters efforts against extremism and terrorism through advanced data analysis and threat detection, aiding in the identification and disruption of terrorist activities. It also helps monitor and prevent sectarian violence by analyzing data to predict flashpoints and recommend preventive measures. Additionally, AI can map the organizational structures of militant groups, enhancing efforts to dismantle these networks and deploy cybersecurity measures to counter digital threats. By integrating AI into its security framework, Pakistan can significantly enhance its surveillance, intelligence, border management, and counter-terrorism efforts, ensuring a proactive and adaptive approach to emerging threats. This integration demands an AI-led mechanism tailored to the specific security challenges faced by Pakistan, ensuring a robust, effective, and ethical implementation of AI technologies.

5

Saudi-Iran Rapprochement and China's Growing Presence in the Middle East



Saudi-Iran Rapprochement and China's Growing Presence in the Middle East

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The Saudi-Iran rapprochement, brokered by China in March 2023, caught the world off guard and represents a significant shift in Middle Eastern geopolitical dynamics. The objective of this paper is to critically examine the Riyadh and Tehran reconciliation process and its long-term sustainability. The paper further analyses the roles of China and the US in the Saudi-Iran rapprochement, while tracing the evolution of Saudi-Iranian relations since 1979. Furthermore, the paper explores China's increasing political presence and economic footprint in the Middle East, assessing the prospects of China overtaking the US as a dominant player in the region. In evaluating the sustainability of the rapprochement, this paper investigates potential spoilers that could increase mistrust and hinder the peace process between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It concludes

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that the Saudi-Iran rapprochement can endure if both states continue to cooperate and manage conflicts rationally, effectively defeating the potential roles of spoilers.

Keywords: Saudi-Iranian rivalry, Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, Middle East, US-China power competition.

Introduction

Saudi-Iranian rivalry is deeply rooted and has shaped the entire geopolitical dynamics of the Middle Eastern region. The historical relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran have been characterized by long-standing antagonism due to persistent ideological, geopolitical, and sectarian differences.4 The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the expansionist ambitions of the then Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini; denouncement of gulf monarchies as not being by the teachings of Islam and an ambition to export the Iranian model, challenged Saudi Arabia's inherently assumed role of the protector of Sunni Islam.⁵ The ideological difference laid down the foundation of the rivalry between the two states, resulting in a constant power struggle for political dominance in the region.⁶ This ideological rivalry transcends mere religious differences, encompassing a broader struggle for political dominance. Both states aspired to establish themselves as the preeminent power in the Middle East, thereby shaping the region's political landscape to align with their respec-

^{4.} Areej, Ayeza. "Fragility of Iran-KSA Rapprochement." The Express Tribune, September 26, 2023. https://tribune.com.pk/story/2437737/fragility-of-iran-ksa-rapprochement.

^{5.} Khan, Imran. "Analysis: How Saudi Arabia and Iran Became Rivals." Al Jazeera, June 4, 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/6/4/analysis-how-saudi-arabia-and-iran-became-rivals.

^{6.} Grumet, Tali R. "New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry." Master's thesis, University of Denver, 2015. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=2027&context=etd.

tive interests and ideological frameworks.

The enduring enmity between KSA and Iran, exacerbated by the Shia-Sunni religious divide, did not lead the two states into any serious confrontation except the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88.⁷ However, the two states remained involved in various proxy conflicts, defining the complex geopolitical dynamics of the region. The hostilities intensified after the execution of Saddam Hussein and the Arab Spring. As a result, a power vacuum was created in the region which increased the intensity of proxy conflicts. The execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr in 2016 further exacerbated their relations and halted the diplomatic relations between the two states.⁸

To normalize relations between KSA and Iran, China mediated a reconciliation agreement in March 2023,9 creating hope for regional peace and stability. The thaw in their relations has garnered the attention of policymakers, analysts, and scholars worldwide. Against this backdrop, this paper discusses the evolution of relations between KSA and Iran over time. It elucidates the role of external players, particularly China as a peace broker between Iran and KSA, highlighting its interests and increasing influence in the region. The paper also assesses the response of the US and the status of its influence in the region. The paper further analyses the sustainability of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement and its contribution towards lasting peace between the two states and the region at large.

^{7.} Grumet. "New Middle East Cold War."

^{8.} Bredemeier, Ken. "Iran Calls Saudi Execution of Cleric a 'Crime'." VOA News, January 5, 2016. https://www.voanews.com/a/kuwait-backs-saudi-arabia-re-calls-ambassador-to-iran/3131559.html.

^{9. &}quot;Iran and Saudi Arabia Agree to Restore Relations." Al Jazeera, March 10, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/10/iran-and-saudi-agree-to-restore-relations.

Historical Background of Saudi-Iranian Relations

Hostility between Iran and KSA had been deeply embedded in their state and institutional structures due to historical patterns. This institutionalized enmity influenced their respective spheres of influence and shaped regional and, at times, extra-regional politics. Their competition for leadership of the Muslim world, differing visions of regional order, the Iranian nuclear program and Saudi apprehensions about it, support to regional allies, oil pricing issues, and control over natural resources were significant factors fueling their rivalry. Additionally, their opposing state and governance structures, systemic affiliations with antagonistic great powers, sectarian and ethnic fissures within their societies, and mutual accusations of inciting rebellion further exacerbated this hostility. While the dynamics of Saudi-Iranian relations are complex and require a thorough assessment, this study briefly discusses some of these factors.

In addition, this multifaceted rivalry has profoundly influenced the geopolitics of the Middle East. Historically, KSA and Iran maintained relatively cordial relations as pro-Western monarchies, collaborating economically and politically through mechanisms such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). However, the 1979 Iranian Revolution marked a turning point, as Iran, under Ayatollah Khomeini, adopted a revolutionary, anti-Western, and anti-monarchical ideology, which posed a direct threat to Saudi Arabia's conservative Sunni monarchy. This ideological shift, combined with the religious divide between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, fuelled a bitter rivalry.

Beginning of Saudi-Iranian Rivalry

The beginning of the rift between Saudi Arabia and Iran after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 established a theocratic

Shiite state under Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Khomeini's denunciation of the Saudi monarchy as corrupt and contrary to the true teachings of Islam to overthrow the Saudi monarchy, coupled with his ambitions to spread his revolution across the Gulf, changed the dynamics of relations between both states.¹⁰ Khomeini's ambitions threatened the sustainability of the Saudi Regime; which also extracted its legitimacy from religious interpretation, and raised the concerns of the ruling royal elites of the country.¹¹ This not only laid the foundation of the rivalry between the two states but also heightened their security concerns.¹²

The antagonism between Tehran and Riyadh fueled the Shia-Sunni divide in the region, prompting both states to vie for influence by propagating their interpretations of Islam. Tehran supported Shia groups, and regimes that oppose Saudi Arabia, while Riyadh leveraged its economic and political clout, particularly its relationship with the US, to counter Iranian influence in the Middle East.¹³

Post-1979 Revolution Era

The relationship between KSA and Iran remained fraught since the Iranian revolution in 1979, characterized by a complex interplay of geopolitical competition, ideological differences, proxies, and regional power struggle. Although occasional attempts at reconciliation between the two states have been made, significant progress has been elusive due to mutual mistrust and deep-seated ideological and political differences.¹⁴

^{10. &}quot;New Middle East Cold War."

^{11. &}quot;Timeline of Iran-Saudi Relations." Wilson Center, January 5, 2016. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-iran-saudi-relations.

^{12. &}quot;New Middle East."

¹³. Huwaidin, Mohamed B. "The Security Dilemma in Saudi-Iranian Relations." Review of History and Political Science 3, no. 2 (December 2015): 73. https://doi.org/10.15640/reps.v3n2a8.

^{14. &}quot;Iran and Saudi Arabia agree to restore relations."

The decade following the Iranian revolution witnessed a dramatic escalation of tensions between the two states. KSA's support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) was seen by Iran as an attempt to quash the revolution. During the war, Iran attacked Saudi oil tankers in 1984, for prompting Riyadh to shoot down Iranian jets. Truthermore, during the Mecca stampede of 1987, clashes resulted in the deaths of over 400 Muslims, including 275 Iranians. Tensions between the two states reached a boiling point when Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran, resulting in the death of a Saudi diplomat. Consequently, Riyadh broke off ties with Tehran in 1988, though diplomatic relations were eventually restored in 1991.

After a tense period in the 1980s, the relations between the two states remained somewhat normal in the 1990s. This improvement was marked by a high-profile visit of Crown Prince Abdullah to Iran in 1997 - the first such visit took place by a senior Saudi official since the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution.²¹ This era of relative peace culminated in the signing of the General Agreement for Cooperation in trade, economy, and cultural exchange in May 1998, followed by the Security Cooperation Agreement in April 2001.²²

^{15.} Chubin, Shahram, and Charles Tripp. Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order. London: Routledge, 2014, 10.

^{16.} Keynoush, Banafsheh. Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes? New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, 120.

^{17.} Chubin and Tripp, Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations, 11.

^{18.} Hiro, Dilip. Cold War in the Islamic World: Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Struggle for Supremacy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019, 105.

^{19.} Hiro, Cold War in the Islamic World, 105.

^{20.} Keynoush, Saudi Arabia and Iran, 131.

^{21.} Hiro, Cold War in the Islamic World, 152.

^{22.} Hiro, Cold War in the Islamic World, 157-159.

Proxy Conflicts

The Saudi-Iranian rapprochement proved short-lived, as the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003 significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.²³ Before this, Saddam's regime served as a buffer between Iran and KSA, curbing Iran's influence in the region. When the US-led coalition ousted Saddam Hussein, a power vacuum emerged in Iraq, creating an opportunity for regional powers to vie for influence. Iran, with its majority Shia population, saw an opportunity to expand its influence in Iraq, a country with a significant Shia majority. Iran began to support various Shia militias and political groups in Iraq, aiming to establish a friendly, Shia-led government that could serve as an ally and extend its regional influence.²⁴

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, viewed the rise of Iranian influence with apprehension. As a leading Sunni power; Saudi Arabia, was concerned about the growing Shia influence in Iraq and the potential for increased Iranian power throughout the Middle East. This concern was compounded by the fear that Iran's influence could inspire Shia populations within Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to challenge their Sunni rulers.

The competition for influence in post-Saddam Iraq also contributed to intensifying the existing rivalry between Iran and KSA. Both countries engaged in a proxy struggle, supporting opposing factions and militias in Iraq. This power struggle also played out in other regional conflicts, such as in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, where Iran and Sau-

^{23.} Jahandad, Junaid, and Ali Mustafa. "Saudi-Iran Rivalry: A Sectarian Divide or Security Dilemma?" Journal of Contemporary Studies 11, no. 2 (Winter 2022): 96. https://doi.org/10.54690/jcs.v11i2.235.

^{24.} Aarts, Paul, and Joris Van Duijne. "Saudi Arabia after U.S.-Iranian Détente: Left in the Lurch?" Middle East Policy 16, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2009.00404.x.

di Arabia backed different sides to assert their influence.

This vacuum was further amplified by the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, which overthrew regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya and fueled instability across the region, creating fertile ground for proxy conflicts between the two rivals. Both sides indulged in violent proxy conflicts across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and Yemen, and backed opposite groups across the region including Hezbollah, Houthis, Kataib Hezbollah, Zaynabiyoun Brigade, and militias, to install friendly regimes in these states and curb the influence of their rival. These proxy wars led their tensions and rivalry to new heights.

Execution of Sheikh Nimr al Nimr

In 2016, the execution of Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al Nimr by Saudi authorities over the charges of working as an Iranian agent led to further deterioration of relations between Riyadh and Tehran.²⁷ Iran strongly condemned the execution, while its supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini vowed divine revenge for this killing. Additionally, protests were prompted in many countries by Shia groups and Shia protestors. In Iran, the Saudi embassy was attacked and parts of it were burnt. Subsequently, this incident drew a severe response from Riyadh, thus straining the relations between the two states in 2016.²⁸

Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement

After seven years of strained relations, Iran and KSA "in a breakthrough development" inked a peace accord mediated by China to restore their diplomatic relations on 10

^{25.} Jahandad and Mustafa. "Saudi-Iran Rivalry." 98.

^{26. &}quot;Saudi-Iran Rivalry."

^{27.} Jalal, Syed U., Yunas Khan, and Ghulam M. Pitafi. "Saudi-Iran Relationship: The Beginning of a New Era." Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities 4, no. 3 (Summer 2023): 5. https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.690236783.

^{28. &}quot;Cold War in the Islamic World." 293.

March 2023. In this rapprochement, both nations acceded to re-open their embassies, they also agreed upon "respect for the sovereignty of states and non-interference in the internal affairs of state."²⁹ During this peace agreement, KSA and Iran expressed their willingness to further the General Agreement on Cooperation of 1998 and the Security Cooperation Agreement of 2001.³⁰ This Saudi-Iranian détente, particularly welcomed by regional states, is considered a positive step towards the stability and security of the region, and it holds promise for easing the regional competition and hostilities between the two states.³¹

In line with the peace deal, the Iranian embassy resumed its operations in Riyadh in June 2023, followed by the opening of the Saudi embassy in Tehran in August 2023. This marked a significant milestone after seven years of strained relations.³² Moreover, flight operations have since been resumed between the two states, with Iranian steel now once again being exported to Saudi markets, and the Saudi navy successfully evacuated 65 Iranians from Sudan.³³ In November 2023, Iranian President, Ibrahim Raisi (late) visited Saudi Arabia for the Gaza summit, marking the first visit by any Iranian president to Saudi Arabia since 2007.³⁴ These developments signal a shift towards more peaceful and amicable relations between the two regional powers.

^{29.} Jalal, Khan, and Pitafi. "Saudi-Iran Relationship." 7.

^{30. &}quot;Iran and Saudi Arabia agree to restore relations."

^{31. &}quot;Iran and Saudi Arabia Agree."

^{32. &}quot;Saudi and Iran Exchange Ambassadors after Rapprochement." Al Jazeera, September 5, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/5/saudi-and-iran-exchange-ambassadors-after-rapprochement.

^{33 .} Wintour, Patrick. "Saudi-Iranian Detente is Fragile but Potential for the Middle East Is Huge." The Guardian, May 8, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/08/saudi-iranian-detente-is-fragile-but-potential-for-the-middle-east-is-huge.

^{34.} Surman, Matt, and Vivian Nereim. "Iran's President Visits Saudi Arabia for the First Time Since the Two Mended Ties." The New York Times, November 11, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/11/world/middleeast/irans-president-visits-saudi-arabia-for-the-first-time-since-the-two-mended-ties.html.

Role of Extra-regional Powers in the Middle East

Historically, the US played a dominant role in the region. The US interests in the Middle East were influenced by various factors including energy-based economic gains, containment of the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), geopolitical transformations, and, maintenance of regional peace and stability.³⁵ The Middle East with Iran and KSA, as the major players, produces around 30 percent of the annual oil for the Western world.³⁶ The strategic significance of the region as a global oil supplier instigated the US to maintain defense ties with KSA, especially after the 1973 oil embargoes.³⁷ The US provided military assistance to KSA and, before 1979, to Iran, along with defense deals to contain Soviet expansion and preserve essential oil routes.³⁸ This ongoing trend of the US aiming to increase its economic and diplomatic influence in the region through strategic partnerships and investments persists today.

In addition to the diplomatic and economic presence, the US conducted arms transfers in the region to strengthen alliances, and further economic agendas and to counter evolving threats from Iran, conflicts in Libya, Yemen, and Syria, and non-state actors like Al Qaeda and ISIS.³⁹ The US aimed to strengthen defense capabilities through arms exports to countries like Kuwait, Iran, and KSA while maintaining stability in the region.⁴⁰ These arms sales served

^{35.} Irani, Robert G. "US Strategic Interests in Iran and Saudi Arabia." The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters 7, no. 4 (1977): 33. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA512229.pdf.

^{36.} Irani. "US Strategic Interests in Iran and Saudi Arabia." 22.

^{37. &}quot;US Strategic Interest in Iran and Saudi Arabia." 21.

^{38. &}quot;US Strategic Interests." 24.

³⁹ . Thomas, Clayton. Arms Sales in the Middle East: Trends and Analytical Perspectives for U.S. Policy. Congressional Research Service, 2017. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44984/5.

 $^{40\,.}$ Thomas. "Arms Sales in the Middle East: Trends and Analytical Perspectives for U.S. Policy."

to promote the US defense market, aligning with global trends where major powers sought economic opportunities and market share in the lucrative market in the region. The US sustained a strong presence in the region historically via economic diplomacy, arms exports, and defense deals to advance its strategic imperatives.

Nevertheless, the geopolitical order in the Middle East is witnessing a paradigm shift with the current diplomatic shift amid the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, highlighting geopolitical realignment that can potentially challenge the traditional influence of the US in the Middle East. The diplomatic breakthrough, negotiated by China, has become a crucial nexus, highlighting the importance of great power rivalry in the region. The significant role of China as a mediator has garnered attention from the West, adding to the narrative of expanding Beijing's influence in the Middle East. In light of entrenched hostilities, this reconciliation is seen as a diplomatic win for Beijing in terms of crisis diplomacy. East.

The reconciliation came at a time when the US influence was perceived to be declining amid inconsistent relations with Riyadh, withdrawal from the Iran nuclear accord, and US withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴³ Over the last decade, China has moved beyond its "non-interference policy," which was primarily demonstrated by its contentious stance towards Sudan and involvement in various discussions on North Korea after 2000.⁴⁴ Most

^{41 .} LSE Ideas. "How Significant Is China's Role in the Saudi-Iran Rapprochement?" China Global South Project, March 17, 2023. https://chinaglobalsouth.com/analysis/how-significant-is-chinas-role-in-the-saudi-iran-rapprochement/.

^{42.} Ideas. "How Significant Is China's Role in the Saudi-Iran Rapprochement?"

^{43.} Hale, Erin. "Can China Replace the US in the Middle East?" Al Jazeera, April 25, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/4/25/can-china-replace-the-us-in-the-middle-east.

^{44.} Hale. "Can China replace the US in the Middle East?"

global observers note that China is expanding its sphere of influence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, thereby reshuffling the geopolitical dynamics.⁴⁵ In addition, Aaron David Miller, a former State Department advisor on Middle East affairs and senior research fellow at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace claims, "I think it demonstrates that US' influence and credibility in that region has diminished and that there is a new sort of international regional alignment taking place, which has empowered and given both Russia and China newfound influence and status." ⁴⁶

China's Increasing Presence in the Middle East

China's media coverage portrayed Xi Jinping as a diplomatic troubleshooter. This narrative promotes China's positive image following the Western criticism of Xi's explicit condemnation of the US containment policies against China in his speeches. The agreement solidifies China's commitment to promoting security initiatives globally, spotlighting Beijing's progress towards peace and development. China's involvement in easing tensions between Tehran and Riyadh comes with strategic advantages. It fortifies China's bilateral ties with both countries, KSA and Iran. Riyadh's interest in joining Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) and Tehran's inclusion in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) strengthens Beijing's influence in Central Asia. Acting as a peacemaker not only fosters stability in the region but also enables

^{45. &}quot;How Significant Is China's Role."

^{46 .} Turak, Natasha. "The China Brokered Saudi-Iran Deal Has Big Repercussions for the Middle East and the U.S." CNBC, March 15, 2023. https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/15/does-chinas-role-in-saudi-iran-rapprochement-represent-a-new-order-.html.

^{47.} Hawkins, Amy. "After Years of Isolation, Xi's China Looks to Dominate World Stage." The Guardian, March 13, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/13/after-years-of-isolation-xi-jinping-china-looks-to-dominate-world-stage.

^{48.} Hawkins. "After years of isolation, Xi's China looks to dominate world stage."

China to counterbalance US strategies through alliance building, economic opportunities, and diplomatic influence.

KSA and Iran are among the largest trading partners of China, which presents an opportunity for future Chinese investments.49 According to Julia Gurol-Haller, a fellow at Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute Freiburg, the rapprochement has the potential to act as a "launchpad to future initiative for China."50 In 2016, China introduced its China's Arab Policy Paper outlining the "1+2+3 cooperation pattern" for engagement in the region.⁵¹ The policy paper underscored the importance of trade, investment, and energy security in the region, given the abundance of liquified natural gas (LNG) and oil in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), region.⁵² In recent years, China's economic expansion necessitated a surge in energy imports to fulfill its growing energy demands, surpassing the US as the largest crude oil importer in 2016. Approximately 40% of the energy imports from the Middle Eastern states require China's greater participation in energy projects while ensuring smooth navigation through trade routes and critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).⁵³ China has already invested more than \$273 billion from 2005 to 2022.54

China is actively engaged in economic partnerships across the MENA region through various strategic initiatives. It

^{49.} Alotaibi, Lujain. "Saudi Arabia and Iran: Beyond Geopolitics." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 6, 2023. https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/89893.

^{50. &}quot;Can China replace the US in the Middle East?"

^{51.} Khan, Suhail A. "China's Increasing Influence in the Middle East." E-International Relations. Last modified September 20, 2021. https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/20/chinas-increasing-influence-in-the-middle-east/.

^{52.} Khan. "China's Increasing Influence in the Middle East."

^{53. &}quot;China's Increasing Influence in the Middle East."

^{54. &}quot;Can China replace the US."

imports substantial amounts of oil and natural gas from countries like Iran, KSA, and Qatar, securing vital energy resources for its growing economy. Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China invests heavily in infrastructure projects such as roads, ports, railways, and energy pipelines, promoting trade and economic integration.⁵⁵ Numerous trade agreements with MENA countries enhance bilateral trade across sectors like technology, manufacturing, and agriculture. Additionally, Chinese companies invest in diverse industries, creating joint ventures that stimulate economic growth and job creation. Financial aid and loans from China support development projects, while industrial parks and economic zones boost local manufacturing capabilities and attract foreign investment. These economic partnerships ensure resource security for China, enhance its geopolitical influence, and foster longterm relationships with major countries in the region. ⁵⁶

Furthermore, a 25-year economic collaboration agreement between China and Iran and a comprehensive strategic partnership with KSA in the year 2022 is another manifestation of China's expanding influence in the Middle East, causing implications for US-China competition in the region.⁵⁷ Iran's oil transfer to China increased from 324,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 1.1 million bpd between 2022 to 2023.⁵⁸ China also encouraged energy sales in yuan currency.⁵⁹

^{55.} Quan, Zhanfu. "BRI Points Saudi Arabia's Rail Network in the Right Direction." China Daily - Connecting China Connecting the World. Last modified October 18, 2023. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202310/18/WS652f-84d0a31090682a5.

^{56. &}quot;China's Increasing Influence."

^{57.} Cheref, Abdelkader. "With Saudi-Iran Deal, China Manifests Its New World Order." The New Arab, March 28, 2023. https://www.newarab.com/opinion/saudi-iran-deal-china-manifests-its-new-world-order.

^{58.} Cheref. "With Saudi-Iran deal, China manifests its new world order."

^{59.} Gallagher, Adam, Sarhang Hamasaeed, and Garrett Nada. "What You Need to Know About China's Saudi-Iran Deal." United States Institute of Peace, 2023.

Will China Replace the US in the Middle East?

Speculative discussions point to the possibility that the Saudi-Iranian deal might indicate a broader shift towards Petro-yuan, posing a significant challenge to the traditional use of dollars. ⁶⁰ The US' restrained response throughout the reconciliation process followed by its absence in the recent deal showcases the Biden administration's understanding of the US' waning control in Middle Eastern politics. This stands in sharp contrast with its previous highly involved role as a supplier of arms to regional states, against what it deemed to be the "troublemaker" Iran. ⁶¹

According to some analysts, China is becoming more influential in the region, but it does not possess the capability to entirely replace the US. Despite China's increasing foothold, the US maintains a significant presence through several military bases and alliances. ⁶² Specialists suggest that Beijing might be reluctant to take responsibility for security matters and does not intend to exert control over the Middle East, rather it will focus on expanding its diplomatic and economic clout in the region. ⁶³ Zakiyeh Yazdanshenas suggests that China's central focus lies in developing a reputable international standing, cost reduction, and securing energy supplies. ⁶⁴

https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/what-you-need-know-about-chinas-saudi-iran-deal.

^{60. &}quot;What You Need to Know About China's Saudi-Iran Deal."

^{61. &}quot;With Saudi-Iran deal, China manifests its new world order."

^{62. &}quot;Explainer-What Are US Troops Doing in the Middle East and Where Are They?" US News & World Report. Last modified January 30, 2024. https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-01-30/explainer-what-are-us-troops-doing-in-the-middle-east-and-where-are-they.

^{63.} Mastro, Oriana S. "The Stealth Superpower: How China Hid Its Global Ambitions." Foreign Affairs, December 11, 2018. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia.

^{64. &}quot;Can China replace."

Scholars like Mark Fitzpatrick caution that China's reluctance to acquire the status of security provider in the region might limit its effectiveness in long-term negotiations. ⁶⁵ Moreover, with Beijing's increased economic and commercial ties with the Middle Eastern states, Washington cannot afford to lose its influence in the region. US prudence lies in maintaining good relations with its allies in the region. The US will strive to maintain its long-standing influence by serving both as a security provider and a balancer in the region via military bases, alliances, and interference in the regional states' internal affairs. ⁶⁶

Assessing the Sustainability of Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement

The recent Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, brokered by China, holds promise for stability and peace in the region. The rapprochement is set to improve diplomatic ties, enhance economic cooperation, and result in the resumption of operations at respective embassies between the two parties.⁶⁷ The agreement also stressed bilateral cooperation in different fields.⁶⁸ However, the durability and sustainability of this rapprochement remain questionable amid historical grievances and current trends.

Saudi Arabia's shift towards rapprochement with Iran is rooted in its broader foreign policy objectives, with a special focus on advancing the vision 2030, and diversification of the economy.⁶⁹ Mounting oil prices can empower the

^{65. &}quot;China."

^{66. &}quot;Explainer-What Are US Troops Doing in the Middle East and Where Are They?" US News & World Report. Last modified January 30, 2024. https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-01-30/explainer-what-are-us-troops-doing-in-the-middle-east-and-where-are-they.

^{67.} Jalal, Khan, and Pitafi. "Saudi-Iran Relationship." 6.

^{68. &}quot;Saudi-Iran Relationship."

^{69.} Farouk, Yasmine. "Riyadh's Motivations Behind the Saudi-Iran Deal." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 30, 2023. https://carnegieendow-

Kingdom to enhance its economic initiatives and regain influence internationally. Furthermore, KSA understands the importance of maritime security in the Persian Gulf, as a major route for global oil export where ships were subject to Iranian attacks. China stepped into the mediation at a time when the diplomatic and economic regional balance of power was tilting favorably towards Riyadh.⁷⁰

In addition, due to its economic initiative of diversification of the economy, Riyadh aims to bring stability in its neighborhood to attract foreign direct investments (FDIs), therefore KSA seeks to resolve the Yemen conflict. To resolve the Yemen conflict, good relations with Iran are of paramount importance. In a remarkable diplomatic achievement, Yemen media highlighted a handshake and discussions between Saudi leaders and Yemeni officials, signaling the efforts to pursue peace in Yemen.⁷¹

Following the recent Saudi-Iranian reconciliation mediated by China, the presence of the KSA delegation in Sanaa depicts a positive path toward rapprochement and peace in the region.⁷² However, the surge in tensions with Iran and regional instability might threaten foreign investment in the project, given Iran's alleged support to Houthi rebels, who were responsible for missile and drone attacks on KSA's infrastructure.73 Consequently, any instability would jeopardize the project funding and potentially scuttle the Kingdom's dream of becoming a global hub, partic-

ment.org/2023/03/30/riyadh-s-motivations-behind-saudi-iran-deal-pub-89421.

^{70.} Farouk. "Riyadh's Motivations Behind the Saudi-Iran Deal."

^{71. &}quot;Saudi Delegation in Yemen for Peace Talks with Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels." France24, April 9, 2023. https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20230409saudi-delegation-in-yemen-for-peace-talks-with-iran-backed-huthi-rebels.

^{72. &}quot;Saudi delegation in Yemen for peace talks with Iran-backed Houthi rebels."

^{73.} Cafiero, Giorgio. "Iranian-Saudi Deal: They Didn't Do It for Love." Responsible Statecraft, September 8, 2023. https://responsiblestatecraft.org/china-iran-saudi-arabia/.

ularly in logistics, cloud computing, industry, and trade.

On the other hand, Iran's motivations for joining hands with KSA also revolve around its economic interests. The internal protests against the regime following the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody, strict international economic sanctions, and diplomatic isolation contributed to Iran's need for economic and diplomatic support from China as well as its Islamic neighbors including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and members of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).⁷⁴ As Barbara Slavin, a fellow at the Stimson Center highlighted, "Iran wants to prove it is not isolated regionally while Saudi Arabia wants an insurance policy against external attacks while it tries to realize its ambitious economic goals."⁷⁵

In addition, billions of dollars are being allocated by KSA for this socioeconomic development project, which acts as an opportunity for the success of this rapprochement in the future, and Riyadh and Tehran are entering into economic partnerships, with Iran considering \$1 billion trade with KSA and KSA ambitions to attract \$100 million tourists by 2030.⁷⁶ Moreover, KSA is increasing its partnerships with various countries like China, Iran, Russia, etc., other than the US under the broader Vision 2030 to diversify its options. KSA and Iran are maintaining economic and diplomatic relations with their new trusted partner i.e., China.

The deal signed between Russia and Iran, which provides Iran with sophisticated military equipment and cyber warfare capabilities in exchange for Tehran's drones to Moscow, poses an imminent threat to Saudi Arabia. KSA may

^{74.} Divsallar, Abdolrasool, and Hesham Alghannam. "The Strategic Calculus Behind the Saudi-Iranian Agreement." The Cairo Review of Global Affairs, April 9, 2023. https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/the-strategic-calculus-behind-the-saudi-iranian-agreement/.

^{75.} Cafiero. "Iranian-Saudi deal."

^{76.} Alotaibi. "Saudi Arabia and Iran: Beyond Geopolitics."

perceive this agreement that could empower Tehran to carry out offensive activities in the region.⁷⁷ Additionally, Riyadh is also apprehensive of the potential Iran, Russia, and China alliance that can help increase Iranian influence in the region and assist Iran in circumventing US sanctions.⁷⁸ Beijing's increased influence in the Middle East, the Western alienation of both Moscow and Tehran amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the US termination of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement with Iran are fostering cooperation among the three countries⁷⁹ i.e. Iran, Russia, and China. The recent rapprochement can be seen as Riyadh's strategy to safeguard itself from getting entangled in the strategic trio of Iran, China Russia, and Western powers. The move highlights the Kingdom's attempt to gain a balanced position among these states to preserve the long-term objective of Vision 2030.

Role of Spoilers

Some factors act as spoilers with a possibility to hinder the reconciliation and diplomatic process between the two countries. The potential normalization of Saudi-Israel relations act as a spoiler and a threat to the balance of power in the region that could potentially challenge the recent reconciliation. ⁸⁰ Iran is apprehensive about a possible military alliance between Israel and KSA in the region for which it is developing advanced hypersonic missiles to counter any possible security threats. ⁸¹ In parallel, Israel has concerns

^{77.} Lieber, Dov, Benoit Faucon, and Michael Amon. "Russia Supplies Iran with Cyber Weapons as Military Cooperation Grows." The Wall Street Journal, March 27, 2023. https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-supplies-iran-with-cyber-weapons-as-military-cooperation-grows-b14b94cd.

^{78.} Tabatabai, Ariane, and Dina Esfandiary. Triple-Axis: Iran's Relations with Russia and China. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, 146.

^{79 .} Frantzman, Seth J. "Iran-Russia-China: Tehran Believes it is Moving toward Triple Alliance." The Jerusalem Post, July 2, 2023. https://www.jpost.com/international/article-748583.

^{80.} Areej. "Fragility of Iran-KSA rapprochement."

^{81. &}quot;Fragility of Iran-KSA rapprochement."

regarding reduced American presence and increasing Chinese and Iranian influence in the region. Israel considers the rapprochement as the "potential barrier in the formulation of the anti-Iran alliance, which was the impetus behind the Abraham Accords."⁸²

Moreover, KSA and Iran maintained good relations for mutual interests, but mistrust is still high among the two parties. Their behavior might change if they perceive any security threat from the other side. Also, the potential Donald Trump electoral victory in the upcoming US elections would threaten the reconciliation and peace process as Trump pursued a "Maximum pressure policy" against Iran and influenced the Arab states effectively. Trump will endeavor to bring back US traditional influence in the Middle East against China and Israel by forming an anti-Iran alliance of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain.

According to some analysts, rapprochement has not yet resulted in a peaceful environment in the region because of Tehran's misconduct and its alleged support to militias and Houthi's activities in the region. For instance, suspected proxies of Iran carried out an attack against US troops in Syria just after the reconciliation. However, the success of the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement would only be possible if both parties efficiently overcome the challenges. KSA and Iran's motivations and benefits for reconciliation

^{82.} Zaaimi, Sarah. "Is Saudi-Iran Reconciliation Threatening the Future of Israeli Normalization?" Atlantic Council, April 21, 2023. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/is-saudi-iran-reconciliation-threatening-the-future-of-israeli-normalization/.

^{83. &}quot;Iranian-Saudi deal."

^{84. &}quot;Fragility of Iran-KSA."

^{85.} Cook, Steven A. "Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement Has Failed to Bring De-escalation." Foreign Policy, June 12, 2023. https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/12/saudi-iran-rapprochement-normalization-deal-china-de-escalation-yemen-syria/.

^{86.} Lamothe, Dan. "Biden Weighs Striking Iranian Proxies after Attacks on U.S. Troops." Washington Post, October 25, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/25/biden-iran-proxy-attacks-us-troops/.

outweigh the challenges, increasing the possibility of sustainable rapprochement in the light of regional economic integration.

Future Prospects

The recent Chinese-mediated peace deal will only result in resolving ongoing conflicts, bringing peace to the region, and shifting the focus of states toward economic growth and developmental initiatives if the involved parties can adeptly tackle the challenges. This reconciliation can potentially help to mitigate the ongoing proxy conflicts in Yemen and Syria, as significant efforts have already been initiated in Yemen following the rapprochement, including the presence of Saudi officials in Sanaa.87 Furthermore, the exchange of the families of prisoners between Sanaa's government and Houthis has also started.88 Such developments signal a potential shift towards an era of constructive peace being established in Yemen. Additionally, peace efforts in Syria are also currently ongoing, and following the reconciliation, in May 2023, Damascus was welcomed once again in the Arab League.89

In addition to bringing peace and stability to the region, this reconciliation may also result in an overall increase in the volume of trade conducted by these states both regionally and globally, but only if both parties proficiently overcome the challenges posed by the spoilers. This becomes even more likely when considering the geographical positioning of Yemen as a neighbor to KSA, where peace and stability in its neighborhood is an economic necessi-

 $^{87\,.}$ "Saudi delegation in Yemen for peace talks."

^{88. &}quot;Yemen Rebels and Government Complete Prisoner Exchange." Al Jazeera, April 16, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/16/yemen-rebels-and-government-complete-prisoner-exchange.

^{89 .} Lewis, Aidan, and Sarah E. Safti. "Arab League Readmits Syria as Relations with Assad Normalise." Reuters, May 8, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/arab-league-set-readmit-syria-relations-with-assad-normalise-2023-05-07/.

ty. However, the probability of the resolution of conflict in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq remains low as these states are not in the immediate neighborhood of Riyadh, thus do not enjoy the same advantages as Yemen, and especially because Iran has established a strong foothold in these states, which it is unlikely to abandon. Despite this, the possibility of the potential mitigation of conflicts and proxy wars in these states continues to remain a possibility, one which might become more likely the longer this rapprochement is sustained.

Recommendations

The success of the rapprochement to bring sustainable peace to the region requires a holistic approach. Firstly, diplomatic engagement is essential in which both states should indulge in constant and transparent dialogues to solve mutual problems, and concerns and to build trust. They should establish a joint committee for the evaluation and the implementation of agreements. Through these, they would be able to manage disagreements and assuage misunderstandings.

Furthermore, confidence-building measures (CBMs) between Riyadh and Tehran are crucial and could be assisted by third-party arbitrators and international bodies to ensure fairness and inclusive dialogue. Secondly, the structural causes of the regional chaos should be addressed to ensure peace. Both parties should address major conflicts in the region like conflicts in Syria and Yemen via inclusive political processes that would involve all the stakeholders, the civil society, and the opposition groups. The provision of humanitarian assistance, development, and reconstruction efforts is necessary to gain the public trust and curb the recruitment of militant groups. By combining economic, defense, and diplomatic initiatives, the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement can move beyond short-term self-interests

and contribute to a peaceful environment in the region. Successful and sustainable reconciliation would only be attainable if the involved parties take these concrete steps and proficiently address the potential challenges, driving the region toward the path of long-term peace and development.

Conclusion

Saudi-Iranian rapprochement represents a dynamic shift in the regional and global political environment. China, a major global player, has expressed an increased interest in merely expanding its economic and diplomatic clout in the region and may continue to play an influential role in this rapprochement. However, even though China is increasing its influence through its soft power in the region, the probability of Beijing overtaking Washington is less likely as China is less interested in taking responsibility for security matters and does not aim to exert direct control over the Middle East. Moreover, the US may attempt not to further lose its influence in the Middle East. The process of rapprochement towards peace and stability will be slow and it is highly likely to encounter challenges, including the longstanding mistrust, the risk of return to maximum pressure policy in the event of Donald Trump's return to the White House, Israel's likely effort to impede the peace process and Iran's alleged support to militias in the region.

Nonetheless, despite these certain challenges and given the national, political, and economic interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran; which outweigh the challenges, in addition to China's economic gains and increasing influence through soft power, this rapprochement becoming a long-lasting strategic outcome is a likely possibility, only if these challenges are overcome.



BOOK REVIEW

The Origins of Victory: How Disruptive Military Innovation Determines the Fates of Great Powers

Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. (Yale University Press, 2023) 568



The Origins of Victory: How Disruptive Military Innovation Determines the Fates of Great Powers

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Technology has remained an important factor in determining the outcome of wars. The subject has attracted the attention of numerous scholars who have extensively analysed the impact of technological advancements on military efficiency. In his book, "The Origins of Victory: How Disruptive Military Innovation Determines the Fates of Great Powers," Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. studies the changing landscape of military competition in the 21st century. With the support of historical examples and his expertise as a military strategist, he explains that disruptive innovation is critical for military dominance, while failure to adapt to it exposes states to significant risks. The author argues that, in an era of military revolution, all major powers face a common task: to be the first to identify disruptive changes and take advantage of their potential earlier than others.

The book under review provides a preliminary assessment of disruptive changes in warfare in an era of increasing rivalry among great powers. It identifies characteristics of a "maturing precision-warfare regime" and speculates about an overlapping successor revolution. The book consists of two parts. The first part identifies the prospective characteristics of the emerging competitive environment. The second part discusses the strategic significance of being the first military organization to identify and exploit a military revolution's potential. It explores the perils of failing to develop proficiency in new ways of war.

The book begins by examining the current state of military technology. The author posits that a disruptive change in combat called a military revolution, is currently underway. The latest military revolution is known as the Precision-Warfare Revolution. Russian military thinkers refer to this type of organization as a "reconnaissance-strike complex," in which combat networks manage and coordinate long-range reconnaissance and strike units. Krepinevich asserts that the era of precision warfare, once dominated by the United States (US), faces challenges from emerging powers such as China and Russia, which have significantly advanced their precision-strike capabilities.

As the precision-warfare system develops, there is another revolution underway due to the developments in commercial technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), synthetic biology, 3D printing, and quantum computing, along with military technologies like directed energy weapons and hypersonic missiles. Krepinevich posits that the US may not necessarily be the first to "exploit this new emerging revolution." To "identify and exploit the next big thing in warfare," the US military must comprehend the key features of this revolution and develop the necessary capabilities, doctrines, and structures to engage in this new form

of warfare more efficiently than its adversaries.

Since the industrial age began, military technology and strategies have significantly advanced in speed, range, communication, scouting, protective armour, and precision firepower, expanding warfare into new domains. The author outlines four key periods of disruptive military change since the mid-19th century: the Railroad, Rifle, and Telegraph Revolution; the Fisher Revolution in maritime warfare; the Interwar Revolution with mechanization, aviation, and radar; and the Precision-Warfare Revolution. He identifies common patterns in these periods to guide military leaders in resource allocation for competitive advantage.

The author maintains that the advent of nuclear weapons in 1945 signified a key moment in military history. The destructive power of nuclear weapons changed the very nature of warfare. Their massive destructive potential rendered war counterproductive as a tool for achieving political goals. The author opines that this Nuclear Revolution or the Firepower Revolution implied a "unique departure from previous military revolutions," hence, making nuclear weapons stand alone.

Furthermore, Krepinevich highlights the rapid emergence of IT-related technologies and their risks in the military domain, particularly focusing on AI. He argues that AI advancements will significantly impact military dynamics and warfare, with automation of strike systems like drones lowering the threshold for conflict initiation. Unlike nuclear weapons, applications of AI are widespread,

making it a double-edged sword due to the opacity of its decision-making processes. This opacity adds value and dangers to AI. Advancements in AI also critically impact the cyber domain, and militaries not adopting AI risk substantial disadvantages.

Recent advancements in hypersonic weapons have led the US, China, and Russia to compete for their development due to their high speed, unusual trajectories, extreme manoeuvrability, and massive kinetic energy, which can disrupt the strategic balance. The author is of the view that deterrence strategies are becoming less effective due to precision warfare, the spread of destructive capabilities to smaller powers and non-state groups, and advancements in cognitive and social sciences. These factors complicate the creation and execution of deterrence plans. This argument appears weak because the effectiveness of deterrence strategies, particularly among nuclear-armed states, remains robust. The example of India-Pakistan, US-China, and US-Russia (despite a long conventional confrontation in Ukraine (backed by the US), war remains localized due to fear of the use of nuclear weapons). Indeed, the US and China demonstrate how nuclear deterrence continues to prevent full-scale wars between rivals, contradicting the author's argument. While precision warfare and the spread of destructive capabilities to smaller powers and non-state actors present new challenges, they do not diminish the core principles and effectiveness of nuclear deterrence among major powers. Destructive capabilities and disruptive technologies certainly add renewed challenges to the existing regional and global security settings without undermining the value of nuclear deterrence.

The second part of the book provides case studies of the British Royal Navy, the German Military, the US Navy, and the US Air Force during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author elaborates on how these militaries were engaged in disruptive innovation that favoured them in the military balance. He aptly quotes the Italian General and Airpower theorist, General Giulio Douhet, who said, "Victory will smile upon those who anticipate changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after changes occur."

The author also highlights the role of operational concepts in shaping military structures and doctrines. For example, Germany's Blitzkrieg strategy used advancements in aviation and mechanization to achieve rapid territorial gains, unlike the prolonged trench warfare of World War I (WWI). According to Krepinevich, understanding operational challenges and constantly adapting strategies is essential to address evolving threats effectively.

The book is useful for readers without prior military knowledge and is relevant in the context of the rising great power competition focusing primarily on the US military and its challenges, with limited attention to other major powers. This narrow focus may leave readers desiring a more comprehensive analysis that includes the perspectives and strategies of other significant global military powers such as China, and Russia.

Although published in 2023, it does not discuss recent conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has provided new insights into modern warfare and the applica-

tion of technological advancements on the battlefield. This omission is notable, as it could have enriched the discussion with practical examples of current military strategies and innovations in real-world conflicts. Nevertheless, the book remains valuable for those interested in military history, the military-technical revolution, military innovation, and national security studies. Its provides insights into the evolution of military technology and the importance of anticipating disruptive changes offer critical lessons for military strategists and policymakers.

Reviewed by Iraj Abid, Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISSS), Sindh.

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BOOK REVIEW

Why Bharat Matters

S. Jaishankar (Rupa Publications India, 2024), 256



Why Bharat Matters

S. Jaishankar (Rupa Publications India, 2024), 256

The book "Why Bharat Matters" is authored by S. Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs and an experienced diplomat with a distinguished career in global diplomacy. Jaishankar is well-known for his insightful perspectives on international relations mainly based on his experiences drawn from key former diplomatic positions, including his appointments as ambassador to the United States (US) and China.

The book comprises eleven chapters, each focusing on various aspects of India's foreign policy behavior and strategic positions. The introductory part provides India's world-view, followed by discussions on the interplay between domestic and foreign policy and its proactive global engagements. Subsequent chapters address historical contexts, specific geopolitical strategies, and future aspirations. The book's central argument focuses on India's shift in foreign policy from a traditionally non-aligned and reactive stance to a more assertive and proactive global engagement. The author contends that this shift is essential for India to secure its national interests and enhance its influence globally. He argues that as a rising power, India must utilize its strategic autonomy to effectively manage the complexities of a multipolar world, emphasizing that India's active par-

ticipation in global affairs is not only beneficial but also necessary for its development and security. Jaishankar emphasizes leveraging India's cultural, economic, and political strengths to develop strategic partnerships and increase its interests globally.

In the first chapter, the author delineates India's new foreign policy, emphasizing five key areas: globalization, global rebalancing, multipolarity, technologies, and evolving power dynamics. The author asserts that India should navigate these challenges by leveraging domestic strengths and forming external strategic alliances. The author underscores the significance of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy and its global engagements, including those in Africa and Latin America. He also observes that reliance on historical analogies, such as the Ramayana, may appear idealistic in the context of contemporary geopolitics.

The broader theme of the subsequent two chapters reflects the importance of foreign policy in the everyday lives of citizens, and the need for an informed public. Jaishankar analyses the impact of India's strategic responses on national security and economic priorities, using examples such as the evacuation operations in Ukraine and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, in the third chapter, the author examines the current global landscape, identifying the vulnerabilities and dependencies that have emerged due to globalization. While persuasive, these two chapters could benefit the readers with a more detailed analysis of how these vulnerabilities affect different Indian economic sectors.

The author, in chapter four, provides a historical context of India and its rise as a proactive global actor. He discusses the challenges posed by the pandemic and geopolitical shifts, highlighting the necessity for infrastructure and human resource development. While critiquing the pre-2014 optimistic perspective on globalization, he emphasizes the significance of strategic autonomy, self-reliance, and a multipolar world order. While the emphasis on strategic autonomy is well-placed, a deeper exploration of practical challenges in achieving it amid global interdependencies is needed. Additionally, the emphasis on India's strategic autonomy and self-reliance might overlook the practical challenges and dependencies that still exist in India's economic and technological sectors.

The fifth chapter discusses the transformative impact of India's proactive engagement under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highlighting significant diplomatic initiatives like the Neighbourhood First policy, Act East Policy, and Link West strategy. The author mentions India's efforts to improve connectivity, cooperation, and strategic partnerships, as well as its active participation in international forums such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the G20. Nonetheless, a more objective perspective would have balanced the argument, as the author overwhelmingly depicts India's diplomatic achievements. The author also commends India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic failing to address the downside of India's dealing with COVID-19. The book certainly provides a limited discussion of the challenges and criticism India faced globally concerning vaccine distribution and the domestic management of the crisis.

The sixth and seventh chapters cover the diplomatic strategies of India, highlighting the importance of building reliable partnerships and understanding global politics. He explains engagements of India with groups such as the Quad, a grouping of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United States (I2U2), and the India-Nordic Summit, stressing the strategic use of India's cultural, economic, and political strengths. The latter two chapters examine the geopolitical landscape and India's responses to emerging global challenges including climate change, terrorism, and pandemics, advocating for India's pivotal role in a multipolar world.

The last two chapters cover India's achievements and future aspirations, highlighting economic growth, technological advancements, and global influence. The concluding chapter, "Why Bharat Matters," presents a thorough overview of India's rising global significance, citing achievements like the Chandrayaan-3 moon landing and the successful hosting of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and G20 summit.

In sum, the book provides an in-depth analysis of India's foreign policy evolution, with an excessive focus placed on India's rise and global stature. The author overemphasizes the Indian foreign policy successes reflecting a degree of bias. Moreover, Jaishankar downplays ongoing internal challenges and regional skepticism from countries like Nepal, Maldives, and Bhutan. More so, the book inadequately addresses India's internal economic challenges, including the deceleration of GDP growth, rising unemployment, and growing income divide. The explanation of the above

aspects would have offered an unbiased and holistic understanding.

In addition, the author emphasizes India's strategic autonomy through an optimistic lens. However, strategic autonomy is not cost-free, it may lead to damaging credibility effects on its alliance system with France, Russia, and the US. Moreover, India's shift away from secular democratic values to a Hindu majority mindset under the BJP rule raises concerns about pluralism and inclusivity. The book does not cover ground on the growing marginalization of Indian minorities and discussion on recent electoral trends which are important for understanding its domestic dynamics and the broader implications of India's foreign policy.

Despite the lack of objectivity and rigor, "Why Bharat Matters" by S. Jaishankar is still a substantial contribution to the discussion on India's foreign policy and global strategy. The detailed geopolitical insights and examination of India's diplomatic strategies make it an essential read for those interested in understanding India's foreign policy behavior and its rising global profile.

Reviewed by Syed Ali Abbas, Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad.

BOOK REVIEW

China's Law of the Sea: The New Rules of Maritime Order

Isaac B. Kardon (Yale University Press, 2023), 416



China's Law of the Sea: The New Rules of Maritime Order

Isaac B. Kardon (Yale University Press, 2023), 416

"China's Law of the Sea: The New Rules of Maritime Order" by Isaac B. Kardon provides a comprehensive analysis of China's maritime claims and activities in East Asian waters, particularly the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Yellow Sea. Kardon, a distinguished maritime scholar from the United States, is currently a senior fellow for China Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and has previously served as an Assistant Professor at the US Naval War College.

The central theme of the book explores whether China is fundamentally challenging the existing maritime order or merely altering specific rules. The book, divided into six chapters, examines China's domestic laws and policies related to defense, research, management, surveying, and patrolling in its adjacent seas, particularly in disputed waters. It covers topics such as geographic regulations, resource rules, navigation requirements, and dispute-resolution mechanisms. The author places special emphasis on the reactions of states particularly affected by these practices, arguing that their responses are necessary to assess the potential normative effects of China's preferred rules.

In addition, Kardon analyses China's practical attempts to influence the international framework of maritime rules, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). However, rather than utilizing a structural approach, he adopts a bottom-up methodology to examine whether and how China is driving the evolution of new maritime rules and its consequential impacts on both regional and international order.

Contextualizing China's "revisionist ambitions," the author believes its rise as a great power and its drive to reshape the maritime order and, by extension, the liberal international order. Moreover, he provides a comprehensive and authoritative analysis of China's dissatisfaction with geographic, resource, navigational, and dispute-resolution rules established by UNCLOS. By portraying China as a revisionist and authoritarian power in East Asian waters, Kardon's argument aligns with the prevailing Western view of China's maritime ambitions. In reality, China is not challenging the international order but is instead seeking to participate in and reshape it to better reflect its own interests and those of other developing nations. China's involvement in international organizations like the United Nations and its commitment to global trade through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) demonstrate its willingness to engage with existing frameworks. These efforts aim to enhance connectivity, infrastructure development, and economic cooperation, thereby promoting mutual growth and stability. Additionally, China adheres to various international agreements and treaties, including the UNCLOS. By advocating for a more multipolar world, China is not rejecting the liberal order but is advocating for a more inclusive and equitable system that accommodates diverse perspectives and development goals.

Additionally, in the later chapters of the book, the author introduces UNCLOS as the "constitution for the oceans" and explores China's disputes with its provisions. He highlights China's reliance on customary international law to assert full entitlements over geographic features not otherwise guaranteed by UNCLOS. He elucidates China's Maritime Power Program, which is transforming China into the world's leading maritime power through domestic mobilization.

Kardon also examines Chinese practices regarding maritime resource rights ascribed under UNCLOS, highlighting the exponential increase in interstate competition for fish, sea minerals, and hydrocarbon resources in the 21st century. He is of the view that this has led to greater encroachment on resource rights. In this context, China continues to assert its historic rights, which not only grant it sovereignty over the nine-dash line but also traditional fishing rights and historic navigational rights. The author presents the positions of states such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Japan. While some have successfully negotiated law enforcement arrangements with China, none have secured a Joint Development Agreement for hydrocarbon exploration, which China perceives as a threat to its energy security.

Furthermore, the book illustrates China's use of UNCLOS as a tool to protect and expand its national interests. However, the realities on the ground reveal a contrasting scenario. China is not alone in using UNCLOS to further its national interests; this approach is also seen in Western maritime behaviour, particularly that of the US, which has not ratified UNCLOS. Therefore, framing China's discontent with the UNCLOS as the weaponization of international law by the Chinese Communist Party aligns with

the Western agenda of undermining the growing influence of China in the region. Moreover, according to the author, China's troubled history of Western invasions through sea has motivated it to uphold the claims of the nine-dash line and rectify the imbalance by becoming a powerful maritime actor. It is important to note that China's maritime ambitions are driven not only by historical claims but also by geopolitical and geoeconomic objectives, national security concerns, and energy security needs.

The focus of the book is primarily regional, contending that the exploitation of UNCLOS by China and the formulation of rules adhering to its national interests do not directly impact the international order. The author believes that China's promotion of the principle of "sovereign supremacy" is confined to East Asia and thus lacks universal character. This contradicts his argument in the introductory chapter, which states that the maritime order has undergone huge transformations to become a part of the broader international order. Consequently, even if China's current maritime rules and practices are regional, they still have an indirect impact on the international order.

Despite its value, the book exhibits limitations. It lacks a comprehensive analysis of the perceptions and responses of key global actors, particularly the US and the United Nations (UN), towards Chinese maritime practices. As the predominant global hegemon, the US plays an important role in shaping international maritime norms and enforcing and adjusting them through its naval presence and alliances. Given the strategic competition between the two powers, understanding the US perspective is essential for comprehending the dynamics of maritime security and diplomacy in the region. The book also fails to explore how the regional states' perceptions of Chinese activities in East Asian waters are influenced by their relations with the US.

Lastly, the author's argument in this book is based on a one-sided perspective, specifically a Western perspective, which renders it biased. China's interests in this region are rooted in shared interests and shared goals, promoting connectivity, infrastructure development, and regional cooperation. Therefore, the author's assertion that China harbors revisionist ambitions is unfounded. Instead, China's actions should be viewed in the context of its efforts to foster mutual growth and stability in the region. This book would have been a more valuable addition if it had incorporated perspectives from both sides and provided an accurate assessment of the facts, rather than solely promoting a Western narrative against China. By including diverse viewpoints, the analysis would offer a more balanced and nuanced understanding of China's maritime ambitions and actions. This approach would contribute to a more comprehensive and objective evaluation, facilitating a better-informed discussion on the complex dynamics of maritime security and international relations in the region.

Reviewed by Maheera Munir, Researcher at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore.

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ACRONYMS

List of Acronyms

AI Artificial Intelligence AUKUS Australia, UK and US

AWS Autonomous Weapon System

BJP Bharatiya Janata Party

BLA Balochistan Liberation Army

BPD Barrels Per Day

BRI Belt and Road Initiative

BRICS Brazil, Russia, India, China, and

South Africa

CBMs Confidence-Building Measures CCW Convention on Certain Conven

tional Weapons

CIWS Close-in Weapon Systems

COIN Counter Insurgency

CPEC China-Pakistan Economic Corri-

dor

DARPA Defence Advanced Research Proj-

ects Agency

DoD Department of Defense
EEZ Exclusive Economic Zone
FATF Financial Action Task Force
FDIs Foreign Direct Investments
FOBs Forward Operating Bases

FPV First Person View

GGE Group of Governmental Experts

GOO Gulf of Oman

GPS Global Positioning System

HI Human Intelligence

ICRC International Committee for the

Red Cross

IHL International Humanitarian Law IIOJK Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu

and Kashmir

ISIS Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISKP Islamic State Khorasan Province ISR Intelligence, Surveillance, and

Reconnaissance

JCPOA Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action

KSA Kingdom of Saudi Arabia LAWS Lethal Autonomous Weapon

System

LNA Libyan National Army
LNG Liquefied Natural Gas
LOAC Law of Armed Conflict

MENA Middle East and North Africa

NAS North Arabian Sea

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organiza-

tion

NDS National Defense Strategy
NLP Natural Language Processing
OODA Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act
OPEC Organization of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries

PLA People's Liberation Army

QUAD Quadrilateral Security Dialogue RAW Research and Analysis Wing SAGE South Asia Gas Enterprise

SCO Shanghai Cooperation Organiza-

tion

SLOCs Sea Lines of Communication

SoH Strait of Hormuz

SOPs Standard Operating Procedures THAAD Terminal High Altitude Area

Defense

TTP Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAE United Arab Emirates
UAVs Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

UCAV Unmanned Combat Aerial

UCAV

Vehicle

UGVs Unmanned Ground Vehicles UNEP United Nations Environment

Programme

UNIDIR United Nations Institute for

Disarmament Research

UK United Kingdom US United States

USN United States Navy

USSR Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics

VBIED Vehicle-Borne Improvised

Explosive Device

VLCC Very Large Crude Carrier Ship WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction

WoT War on Terror WWI World War I