



**INSTITUTE OF  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

**web:** www.issi.org.pk  
**phone:** +92-51-9204423, 24  
**fax:** +92-51-9204658

*Report – Book Launch*

# **“Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: New Technologies and Challenges to Sustainable Peace”**

**September 18, 2019**



*Rapporteur: Ghazala Yasmin Jalil*

*Edited by: Najam Rafique*

## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) organized launch of the book on September 18, 2019 titled "*Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: New Technologies and Challenges to Sustainable Peace*" authored by Dr. Rizwana Abbasi and Dr. Zafar Khan. Dr. Rizwana is an Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations, NUML, Islamabad and Dr. Zafar Khan is Assistant Professor at the Department of Strategic Studies, NDU Islamabad. Eminent commentators on the book included: Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi, Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS); Mr. Khalid Banuri, former Director General, Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs (ACDA), SPD; and Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Professor, School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), Quaid-i-Azam University.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry, Director General ISSI said that the book addresses the issue of nuclear deterrence in South Asia, a subject of vital importance to Pakistan. The authors, he said, have argued that South Asia is embroiled in a systemic security dilemma. The book rests on the main pillars of neorealist argument - anarchy, fear and uncertainty. The core argument of the book is that the evolving technologies and competing strategies in South Asia make peace fragile and war more likely. He noted that the authors contend that the strategic pattern of security dilemma is emanating from a broader systemic security dilemma between US and China in Asia, where US sees China as a threat and is building up a strategic partnership with India in order to counter-balance China's influence, while Pakistan is moving closer to China to counter-balance India. These alignments increase uncertainty, and mistrust between India and Pakistan, moving the two nuclear armed states into yet more crises and military conflicts.

Congratulating Dr. Rizwana Abbasi and Dr. Zafar Khan for their commendable work, he said that the book is timely because tensions in South Asia are high after India's termination of the autonomous status of IOK. Moreover, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has also issued a threat over India's No First Use (NFU) policy whereby he said that India has adhered to the NFU so far, but what happens in the future depends on the circumstances. He pointed out that this statement signalled a threat to Pakistan with first use of nuclear weapons. He further highlighted that India is not only moving towards a doctrine of first use, but there are indications that it is moving towards a doctrine of nuclear pre-emption as well. This is dangerous thinking on the part of India. It promises to have lasting effects on nuclear deterrence, force postures, introduction of

new nuclear technologies, and change in nuclear doctrines. He said that the book helps us better understand the stresses on nuclear deterrence emanating from India's irresponsible conduct as a nuclear weapon state.

Looking at the bigger picture while zooming out of Asia and South Asia, Ambassador Chaudhry pointed towards the new arms race that the US and Russia are embroiled in. He opined that the excessive US focus on non-proliferation has receded in the background under the Trump administration, and on the contrary nuclear weapons have assumed renewed importance. Both the superpowers are massively modernizing their nuclear forces and going for new nuclear weapons. Landmark arms control treaty, the INF, has ended and New Start, which puts a limit on the number of strategic weapons that the two sides can employ, is at the risk of demise. He said that this is bound to impact the prevailing international nuclear order and regional dynamics of nuclear deterrence.

Talking about the rationale of the book, Dr. Rizwana Abbasi said that the book explains and analyses the evolving dynamics of nuclear deterrence in South Asia underpinned by the arrival of new technologies and explores the challenges of peace and stability between India and Pakistan. The book found that the dynamics between India and Pakistan are interlinked and pulled by competing strategies that play out between US and China in the broader Asia-Pacific region. She said that India is perceived as a strategic partner of US to the latter's offshore balancing strategy, while Pakistan is becoming an essential component of China's evolving Belt and Road Initiative. The book looks at how the introduction of conventional and nuclear technologies by one state affects strategy of another state. This in turn affects the strategic stability of Asia in general, and South Asia in particular.

She said that their study finds that the dynamics in Asia-Pacific pull South Asia into the classic vicious cycle of security dilemma - China's regional rise vs US offshore balancing strategy. The economic growth of Asia has elevated the geostrategic importance of this region. US maintains balance of power in the region through bilateral and multilateral alliance systems, and will continue to modernize all three legs of its strategic triad. It has an increased reliance on missile defense systems. She said that US has to spend \$ 700 billion to maintain its current deterrent posture in the next 25 years. The book argues that US footprint in Asia in turn undermines the

security of China, leading it to take effective counter security measures. These could undermine US systems. She said that China is the second largest economy, which has reduced the power equation with US. The resulting power transition has created a tough competition between the two. China is also building up its nuclear potential and also using a mix of soft and hard power to safeguard its core national interests. China is modernizing its arsenals, improving its air and maritime strengths, and producing technologies designed to deny freedom of movement to hostile powers in the air and waters off its coast. This creates an opportunity for India to bolster its economy and military power to attain its political profile and status at the global level. She said that due to its geostrategic location, India becomes vital to US defense strategy of rebalancing in Asia. US alliance with India and India as a hedge against China has created a vicious cycle of a severe security dilemma between India and Pakistan. India's unchecked military modernization and postures create strain on strategic stability. Thus, Pakistan's strategic posture is effected by Indian strategy, posture and technologies. Dr. Rizwana said that the systemic security dilemma is shaping the dynamics of South Asia, which drives the security dilemma between India and Pakistan.

Dr. Zafar Khan drew attention to the broader conceptual debate. He said that the book looks at the contemporary challenges to strategic stability in South Asia. It looks at the changing nature of Indian strategy and doctrine that may not be consistent with India's previous strategy conceived in the draft nuclear doctrine. One of the chapters, he said, talks about why there is a change in Indian nuclear doctrine - such as minimum deterrence, No First Use, and doctrinal posture of massive retaliation. He said that the study found that the changes that India is trying to bring about in nuclear policy are underpinned by introduction of new technologies. The introduction of new technologies fuels an arms race and introduces further crisis instability in South Asia. Security dilemma between Pakistan and India is exacerbated by mega projects by India such as sophisticated air defense systems, the acquisition of S-400 systems, anti-submarine systems, drones, battlefield nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers, submarine launched ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and MIRVed weapons. The study has found that in response to these technological advancements by India, Pakistan tries to maintain a balance rather than parity with India under the principle of minimum deterrence. He said that Pakistan tries to plug the deterrence gap where it is absolutely essential. Pakistan has, many a times, proposed a strategic restraint regime in order to check the arms race and mitigate the security dilemma, but has not

received a favorable response from India. So far, deterrence has held between India and Pakistan thereby preventing big wars. However, they have not prevented serious crises and conflicts, which in turn is putting pressure on nuclear deterrence.

Commenting on the book, Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi said that it has been more than 20 years since the introduction of nuclear weapons in South Asia and deterrence still holds. He said that we are at a point where nuclear deterrence may have been overtaken by developments in arms build-up and evolving strategic posture of India. India and Pakistan have been engaged in force modernization over the last few years, and this has led to doctrinal developments and introduction of advanced missile technologies and improvement on payloads, accuracy and range. He said that the two countries are developing a range of technologies that would further heighten the two countries' threat perceptions. He said that the authors have dealt extremely well with the emerging geo-economic, military and political trends in the Asia-Pacific region including US-China competition which also affect India and Pakistan security dilemmas including their nuclear policies in the context of minimum deterrence. He was of the opinion that the book is relevant for policy makers, and contributes to the changes that are taking place in the doctrines, policies and postures in South Asia. He suggested that the authors may like to explain the concept of sufficiency - What is sufficient level or capability of deterrence for Pakistan's stated credible minimum deterrence policy - as well as the parameters of the newly adopted full spectrum policy in their second edition of the book. He commended the authors for contributing to the literature on South Asian security at multiple levels of analyses - strategic, economic and political, and said that the book will be a good guideline for analyzing complex interdependent relations between great powers and their impact on regional security dynamics.

Mr. Khalid Banuri observed that the authors took up an ambitious project where they have looked at dyads of relations that are bilateral and trilateral among US, China, India and Pakistan, weaving in the issue of new technologies and how they are connected with these complex relations. They merged the concept of nuclear deterrence with all this and also looked at the fragility of peace, and the possibility of conflict. Mr. Banuri said that putting all these complex ideas and a lot of information in one volume is difficult and this book is a goldmine of information for a researcher. He said that there is a dearth of writings on the issue, especially by Pakistani writers. He commended the book for linking regional security dynamics with global

security dynamics. Talking about the thesis of the book, he said that it canters around a classic security dilemma, and the arguments build around it. While being a rich source of information he also talked about the challenges. The authors seem to generalize about dialogue between India and Pakistan. Pakistan, he said, has always wanted dialogue, while India has been reluctant in this regard. He also suggested that the language of the book could be simplified.

Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal said that there are four ways to look at the book. One is through the theoretical construct of the book. The authors took security dilemma and build their argument around it intertwining it with the arrival of new technologies. Second is that the book avoids going into detailed history of Indian and Pakistani nuclear programs which have been widely written on in the past. Therefore, the book does not lose the reader's interest. Third is the research methodology where the authors have used primary and secondary sources which are not easy to gather. Fourth, the book offers a focus that is not Euro centric and deals with the security dynamics of Asia linking it to South Asian security. Pointing out a few shortcomings, he said that the entire focus of the book has been on the dynamics of security dilemma. He highlighted that there is an alternative view - that is the strategic culture that is also of vital importance. He said that the manipulation of the Indian strategic culture of mistrust against Pakistan was exploited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the recent election campaign, and also in 2014. He said that it is the Indian hegemonic designs in the region and its global ambitions that are creating problems and insecurity. Overall, he commended the book for giving tremendous information which can guide students of international relations and policy makers.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI, said that nuclear deterrence is not a static concept, it evolves as the technological context evolves. Similarly, as countries' threat perceptions change, the security dynamics change as well. He said that the authors have looked at wider competition between China and US, and not just India and Pakistan. He opined that it is important to look at the behavior of India and Pakistan. Who is a responsible state and who is not. There has been a lot of propaganda against Pakistan's nuclear program. In fact, Pakistan did not want nuclearization of South Asia, and proposed making South Asia a nuclear weapons free zone, but the idea was not endorsed by India. Once India went nuclear, Pakistan had no choice. Pakistan's nuclear program is India-specific and for deterrence

purposes only. He said that this book by Dr. Rizwana and Dr. Zafar Khan makes a valuable contribution to the issue of nuclear deterrence in South Asia.