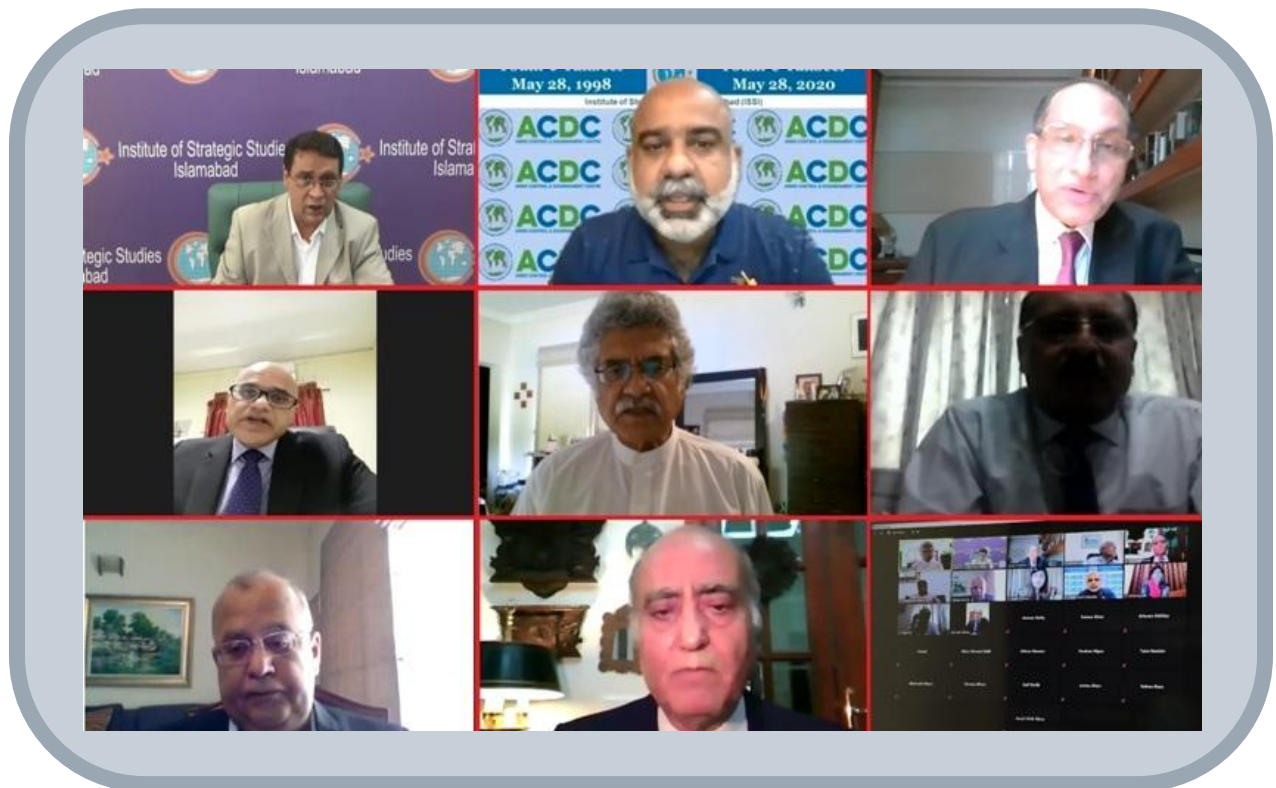




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Report – Webinar
“Yaum-e-Takbeer”
May 28, 2020



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The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a webinar to commemorate the twenty-second anniversary of the “Yaum-e-Takbeer” on May 28, 2020. Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Honourable Shah Mehmood Qureshi, sent a “Special Message” for the webinar. Ambassador Zamir Akram, Advisor Strategic Plans Division (SPD), spoke on “Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme: A Guarantor of Strategic Stability in South Asia,” Dr. Zafar Ali, Director General, Strategic Export Control Division (SECDIV) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) made remarks on “Pakistan as a Responsible Nuclear Power,” and Dr. Ansar Pervez, former Chairman, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) shared his thoughts on “Pakistan’s Peaceful Nuclear Programme.” Special remarks were made by Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, Director General, Arms Controls, Disarmament and International Security (ACDIS), MOFA and by Ambassador Salman Bashir, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. The webinar was moderated by Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research ISSI. Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC made the introductory remarks. Welcome remarks were delivered by Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, made concluding remarks.

Special Message by Honourable Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhary,

Members of the ISSI team,

Distinguished experts and participants

I would like to thank the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) for providing me this opportunity to share my sentiments at this webinar to mark Yaum-e-Takbeer. Every year, May 28, serves as an earnest reminder of Pakistan’s desire for peace, as well as, the nation’s unswerving resolve to defend its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. It is also an occasion to reiterate our gratitude and appreciation to our scientists, engineers, armed forces and policymakers for their determination, dedication and hard work that enabled Pakistan to acquire nuclear capability for deterrence and self-defence.

Today we are commemorating Yaum-e-Takbeer against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens the international community without regard to geographic boundaries,

ethnic, political and religious divides. It reminds us of the interdependence of the global community and the necessity for all nations to cooperate and collaborate in the face of the common challenges of the 21st century including disease, hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and climate change.

Yet, unfortunately, the current security situation in South Asia underscores the compulsion for Pakistan to remain ever vigilant of the more traditional threat to national security emanating from the hegemonistic ambitions of a larger neighbour under the rule of an ultra-nationalist and revisionist regime.

The recent escalation along the Line of Control, incessant ceasefire violations and the canard of cross-border infiltration are designed to divert international attention from the gross human rights violations by the Indian Occupation Forces in the Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

The BJP government's illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, in an attempt to change the internationally-recognised disputed status of occupied Jammu and Kashmir and alter its demographic structure - in flagrant violation of the Security Council resolutions, UN Charter and bilateral agreements - have engendered further volatility in South Asia. The irresponsible statements made by senior members of the BJP government, including on nuclear issues and threats of dismemberment, leave little doubt about the reckless mindset at work.

The flawed notion of the establishment of a 'new normal' and fantasies of 'punishing Pakistan' while remaining below the threshold of a nuclear conflict demonstrate irresponsible and dangerous behaviour by India. The world witnessed a demonstration of this belligerent military posture in February 2019, when in the wake of the Pulwama incident in occupied Kashmir, there was an attempt to resort to aggression against Pakistan on a completely false pretence. While responding effectively in self-defence and deflating exaggerated notions of military superiority, Pakistan exhibited restraint and responsibility. However, it is not always possible to predict the trajectory of escalation in similar situations and Pakistan should not be expected to one-sidedly carry the burden for maintaining peace.

Pakistan is a peace-loving country. Our conduct as a nuclear weapon state will continue to be defined by restraint and responsibility. As we seek to ensure our national security, credible

minimum deterrence remains our guiding principle. We are opposed to a nuclear or conventional arms race in the region. Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to peace and stability by putting forward the proposal for a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR). Yet our desire for peace should not leave anyone in doubt regarding our capability and will to defend ourselves effectively against any form of aggression.

Distinguished participants,

Let me conclude by recognising the remarkable contributions of our scientific organisations to the socio-economic development of Pakistan and the welfare of its people. The genesis of Pakistan's nuclear programme was exclusively peaceful. Since the establishment of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1956, we have been working to harness nuclear technology for socio-economic development and have made great strides.

The IAEA is playing an active role in helping countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan is working together with the IAEA and other countries in realising the true potential of peaceful uses of nuclear technology in a safe, secure and safeguarded manner.

With over one million cancer patients annually, the PAEC cancer hospitals are contributing to SDG 3 on "Good Health & Well-being." For SDG 2 on "Zero Hunger," the agriculture & biotech institutes have developed 111 different crop varieties and millions of acres have been treated through Integrated Pest Management (IPM). For the provision of "Affordable and Clean Energy" as envisioned in SDG 7, nuclear power is being expanded in the total energy mix. The PAEC is also contributing to the goals of "Quality Education" (SDG 4) and "Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9) through promoting research and development in its training institutes. These efforts have resulted in increased collaboration with CERN including through manufacturing equipment for the world's largest particle accelerator.

In the face of COVID-19 pandemic, our scientific organisations were quick to come up with local designs for essential equipment, such as ventilators and other indigenous solutions, thus, enabling us to be better prepared to face the challenge. This is a manifestation of the fact that, as a country with extensive experience and expertise in science and technology, Pakistan can be a significant contributor to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the

international level. There can be tremendous spin-offs of our scientific programmes in terms of expanding our high technology exports.

We will strengthen partnerships at the international level, including the UN and IAEA, as providers of services and expertise in science and technology, including civilian nuclear applications.

I thank you.

Introductory Remarks by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI

Malik Qasim Mustafa said that since May 28, 1998, the Pakistani nation, every year, proudly commemorates “Youm-e-Takbeer,” as a day, which has not only augmented our national security but it has ensured our survival against any aggression by a large and more powerful adversary, India. This was a day when Pakistan by conducting nuclear tests, restored the balance of power in the South Asian region. Since then, Pakistan has been embarked upon a path to bring peace by safeguarding its freedom through maintaining strategic stability with restraints and responsibility. Pakistan is also making use of peaceful nuclear technology to bring prosperity and growth.

He noted that Pakistan faces challenges ranging from the fragility of strategic stability due to India’s ongoing military modernisation drive to achieve great power status to India’s shifting nuclear and conventional war-fighting doctrines and postures and selective international discrimination for not allowing Pakistan to do international trade for peaceful purposes. However, Pakistan is constantly making every effort to overcome these challenges and hurdles and achieving progress.

Therefore, keeping in mind the importance of this day, the ACDC has organised this webinar not only to commemorate Yaum-e-Takbeer but also looks at this day with an opportunity to access what Pakistan has achieved so far in terms of:

1. The role of the Pakistani nuclear programme in ensuring Strategic Stability in the South Asian region;
2. Pakistan’s major achievements to earn the status of a responsible nuclear power;

3. Pakistan's goals to utilise nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and for the service of the nation;
4. What are the challenges and hurdles ahead and
5. What is the way forward to exploit full potentials of the nuclear and related technologies to bring peace and prosperity in the region?

He said that I hope that our distinguished panellists would share their views on some of these aspects and help us assess where we stand after 22 years.

Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry in his welcome remarks said that Yaum-e-Takbeer is a commemorative event that we all regard as having restored the balance of power. He said that the rationale for Pakistan's nuclear capability was to counterbalance the conventional disparity with India and to deter aggression. For India acquisition of nuclear capability was status-driven. He said that once India tested nuclear devices in May 1998, Pakistan had to follow suit. Pakistan also demonstrated that it can resist international pressure when it comes to its core security interests. He noted that nuclear deterrence has been instrumental in averting a major war in the last twenty-two years. Prime examples are Kargil, Mumbai attacks of 2002 and surgical strike in Balakot, where the situation did not flare beyond a certain point. He, thus, stressed that a robust deterrence is imperative in preventing wars in South Asia. He said that there can be no complacency on that.

He said that Pakistan has followed the principle of credible minimum deterrence and does not want to indulge in an arms race. He stressed that Pakistan also needs to maintain full-spectrum deterrence to deter the Indian aggression at the operational, tactical and strategic level. He noted that Pakistan needs to be watchful of the growing Indo-US nexus. He concluded by saying that Pakistan takes its security and sovereignty seriously. Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability helps ensure the country security and, thus, it is non-negotiable.

Remarks by Ambassador Zamir Akram, Advisor Strategic Plans Division

Ambassador Zamir Akram spoke on “Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme: A Guarantor of Strategic Stability in South Asia.” He said that strategic stability in South Asia has gone through various phases. It has always been determined by the capacity and capability to ensure deterrence. Prior to nuclear tests of 1998, it relied on conventional weapons in which Pakistan was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis India. After the de facto nuclear capability since the 1980s, nuclear deterrence was based on virtual nuclear capability. This prevented the outbreak of a major war. The 1998 tests were a game-changer and brought about a paradigm shift in South Asia, whereby strategic stability was established on the basis of mutually assured destruction. It neutralised the Indian conventional weapons superiority. Unhappy with this, India developed the Cold Start doctrine. Pakistan responded by developing the full-spectrum deterrence, which ensured deterrence at the operational, tactical and strategic level. This was made possible by the development of short-range low-yield nuclear weapons by Pakistan.

Ambassador Akram said that the real issue is the future. The issue is the irresponsible nature of the Indian behaviour plus the Indo-US nexus against China and Pakistan that is destabilising. This has encouraged India to go for military modernisation, especially in the strategic field. This includes ballistic missile defence capabilities, submarine-launched ballistic missiles on nuclear submarines, development of anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities, MIRVing of missiles and the Brahmos super-sonic missiles that are being tested. Purpose of the modernisation is to establish a conventional upper hand over Pakistan. India wants to develop a capability that can launch a disabling first strike against Pakistan.

To ensure strategic stability in coming years Pakistan needs to develop capabilities that will counter these Indian challenges. While Pakistan should not engage in an arms race, it should respond selectively. Pakistan needs to develop the ability to penetrate the Indian BMD, develop a credible sea-based nuclear capability. Pakistan needs to develop ASAT capabilities because the wars of the future will be fought in space. He said that Pakistan also needs to enhance its conventional capability to deter India at lower rungs of the escalation ladder. Pakistan needs to develop a deterrence plus approach, which means that it needs to counter a possible Indian strike

at the conventional level. After that, Pakistan would retain the option to escalate to a nuclear level.

Remarks by Dr. Zafar Ali, Director General, SECDIV MOFA

Dr. Zafar Ali highlighted the role of “Pakistan as a Responsible Nuclear Power.” He said that Pakistan’s nuclear programme is security-driven. He said that Pakistan fulfils all the markers of a responsible nuclear state. These include strong command and control, the effectiveness of export controls and corresponding regulatory controls and demonstrative ability to engage in international non-proliferation negotiations. Pakistan has a stringent export control regime that is backed up by a strong legislative regime. Pakistan has always supported the international non-proliferation regime. Pakistan has, thus, behaved responsibly. Prior to 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan made efforts to keep nuclear weapons out of South Asia. Pakistan has since acted as a responsible nuclear state by showing restraint in times of crisis.

He said that the Indian behaviour has not been that of a responsible nuclear state especially in the post-Pulwama crisis where it indulged in sabre-rattling and threatening language. India used irresponsible language and posturing with words like “mother of all nuclear bombs” and “India nuclear weapons are not for Diwali.” He said this reflects irresponsible behaviour on the part of India. Pakistan, on the other hand, behaved responsibly post-Pulwama strike. It was Pakistan restraint that prevented escalation in South Asia. He said that it is sad to see the Indian reckless behaviour being rewarded by the international community in the form of membership to the international export control cartels.

Remarks by Dr. Ansar Pervez, former Chairman PAEC

Dr. Ansar Pervez shared his thoughts on “Pakistan’s Peaceful Nuclear Programme in the Service of Mankind.” He said that the application of nuclear technology basically means the use of the different type of radiation, which comes out of the nucleus, and the energy released when nuclear fission takes place in a chain reaction. These nuclear radiations could penetrate deep, could ionize materials that fall in its path, or attack the Cell DNA. That, he highlighted, creates a whole range of opportunities. Due to their capability to penetrate and interact, these radiations can be used in the diagnostics of diseases, in treatment of cancer and related ailments, in the mutation of

crops to produce new varieties, which grow faster bigger, need less water, resist insects, in food preservation by killing the bacteria and in non-destructive testing of materials and equipment and in sub-soil water studies.

He highlighted that the other uses of nuclear technology are based on nuclear fission. In this process, heavy nuclei break up releases energy and chain reaction can be produced. If one can control that process, it is possible to build a nuclear power plant to produce energy. For power generation, Pakistan has five nuclear power plants that are operational.

Dr. Pervez added that to make use of nuclear radiations in the health sector, Pakistan has around 18 nuclear medical centres - 6 in Punjab, 5 in Sindh, 5 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one each in Baluchistan and Islamabad. These centres entertain around a million patient visits every year. The PAEC is the leader in the application of nuclear medicine for diagnostics and treatment of cancer where one million patients visit annually

He said that radiation technologies help improve food crop, preserve food and kill insect pests and help in subsoil soil water studies. He noted that new varieties developed in through the use of nuclear technology have resulted in improvements in crop productivity and in the fight against salinity and drought. He estimated the benefit to Pakistan's economy resulting from nuclear technologies at around Rs 1200 billion.

He concluded by praising the role of PAEC in using nuclear technologies for peaceful uses, which contribute to at least 12 of the 17 United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals including no poverty; erase hunger; promoting good health and well-being; providing quality education; promoting gender equality; making affordable and clean energy; promoting decent work and economic growth; industrial innovation and infrastructure.

Remarks by Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, DG ACDIS, MOFA

Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, in his remarks, said that while much is said about Pakistan's military programme, very little is known about its civil nuclear programme. He highlighted that the genesis of Pakistan's nuclear programme was peaceful primarily for energy generation. He said that Pakistan has harnessed nuclear technology for socio-economic development especially in the field of medicine for diagnosis and treatment, in agriculture to develop drought-resistant

crops and overall contributes to food security. He stressed that thrust of Pakistan's nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes and should be seen as such.

Mr. Akhtar also talked about the role of Pakistan Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS) that trains personnel from all over the world. Pakistan has the experience, technology and services to be a supplier in cartels like Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG). Pakistan, thus, has a strong case for the membership of the NSG. Leaving out Pakistan, he said, will be a loss for the regime. However, Pakistan has always been committed to non-proliferation and will continue to adhere to the non-proliferation regime.

Commenting on Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, he said that it is, without a doubt, meant to defend against aggression. He highlighted that Pakistan has to constantly adjust its nuclear forces and posture in the face of conventional and nuclear build-ups by India and technological innovations. These constantly pose a challenge for Pakistan's security and its nuclear deterrence. He expressed confidence in the Pakistani scientists who can help overcome all challenges thrown at Pakistan.

Remarks by Ambassador Salman Bashir, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Ambassador Salman Bashir said that Pakistan's nuclear tests on May 28 and 30, 1998 marked a watershed in the nation's quest for security. The devices tested conformed to weapon configuration capable of delivery. At one go, Pakistan had established strategic equilibrium in South Asia and neutralised India's conventional preponderance. Nuclear weapons, together with an effective missile programme, were henceforth to be the guarantors of the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Twenty- two years on, Pakistan's strategic weapons capability is robust. He said that in these years, the doctrine of minimal credible deterrence has guided the development of Pakistan's strategic capabilities on land, sea and air, including second-strike options.

Ambassador Bashir highlighted that it was India, not Pakistan that initiated the nuclearisation of South Asia. The Smiling Buddha of 1974 and the Pokhran Indian nuclear tests on May 11, 1998, were grave provocations. At the time, Pakistan had no other option but to respond. Subsequently,

all the Pakistani initiatives, advocating strategic restraint in South Asia and numerous bilateral proposals in this regard, were stonewalled by India.

He said that the root cause of the intensely adverse relationship between Pakistan and India is the latter's inability to accept the existence of Pakistan as an independent state and establish peaceful cooperative relations on terms of equality. Unfortunately, the nature of this adversarial relations has not changed. India has sought to reassert its conventional superiority by toying with dangerous concepts, such as the "Cold Start." The Indian war machine has continued to contemplate conventional conflict under the nuclear overhang.

He noted that Pakistan has frustrated these designs by developing battlefield nuclear response. In the meanwhile, India has attempted to field nuclear weapons at sea, obliging Pakistan to develop sea-based deterrence.

He stressed that proscription of war following a peaceful settlement of disputes between Pakistan and India is the only rational option. Unfortunately, India has been blinded by its hegemonic ambitions. The nuclear tests of 1998 have indefinitely tied India into a regional strategic equation with Pakistan. Its aspirations to emerge as a global power have been dashed. It is stunning that a country of the size of India continues to pursue self-defeating policies in the region and remains wedded to militaristic notions of power that are deleterious to stability and peace in South Asia.

He stressed that having ensured its security, Pakistan must now prioritise its economic development. Indeed, the logic of securing nuclear deterrence was that it will unfetter us from security anxieties and enable us to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to achieving prosperity.

Ambassador Bashir concluded by saying that twenty-two years after the nuclear tests, it is time now to bring about an internal transformation of character that is worthy of our status as a nuclear power. Pakistan's geostrategic importance as a pivot for peaceful commerce among all of its adjoining resource-rich regions beckons us to follow enlightened forward-looking policies to extend the arc of economic cooperation for win-win partnerships. Thus, radiating stability and peace premised on development and prosperity.

Question and Answer Session

Q: How to make the world realise the approach is India taking is risky for South Asia and the world?

A: It is extremely difficult to convince the US because of the strategic partnership that they have, which is aimed at containing China. The US has facilitated India's arms build-up, supplied it with sophisticated weapons including transfer to technology. Whatever Pakistan do will not convince India to change its approach. Moreover, the Indians have projected their belligerence in the context of Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

Q: In the Indian academic nuclear discourse there is talk of responding to Pakistan's threat of non-state actors, which seems to be very dangerous thinking. What can Pakistan do to counter India's narrative?

A: Pakistan has done a lot at the international level and there is no fear at international forums that Pakistan's nuclear capability is at risk at the hands of non-state actors. At the international level, there is a recognition of the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear capability. This is a purely western driven narrative that should change. India using the bogey of NSA to divert attention from Kashmir.

Pakistan is not Syria, Iraq or Libya. Conducting any operation against Pakistan on the pretext of non-state actors is very dangerous. Most of the rhetoric is for government consumption. Post-Pulwama the Indian government, media and think-tanks know that there will be a tough response by Pakistan. So, we need to distinguish between their boasts and what they can do.

Q: There is a discussion of possible nuclear testing by the US. Should we be concerned about the resumption of testing by India?

A: The matter of the US nuclear testing depends on whether the US President Donald Trump is re-elected in November 2020. There is no likelihood of nuclear tests at the moment. Thus, the norm against nuclear tests is intact.

Concluding Remarks by Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood in his concluding remarks said that in the adversarial relationship between India and Pakistan there were many core issues like Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen. Thus, security became a primary concern for Pakistan against a conventionally superior India. Pakistan's nuclear capability addressed the country's security needs. Despite wanting to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons, Pakistan was forced into making the choice to go nuclear. He said that the de facto acceptance of India in the international nuclear club has emboldened India and has created additional space and legitimacy for India to invest in nuclear weaponisation that is detrimental to strategic stability. He said that international powers act as facilitators for the Indian hegemonic ambitions. India has, thus, gone for a second-strike capability, the massive building up of its conventional capabilities, and has even developed anti-satellite capabilities.

Ambassador Mahmood emphasised the need to induce a change in India. It is, he stressed, in India's own interest to change to achieve a great power status. India needs to realise if it is bogged down in regional rivalries it will hinder its rise to big power status.