

***Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: New Technologies and Challenges to Sustainable Peace*, Dr. Rizwana Abbasi, and Dr. Zafar Khan, New York: Routledge, 2020, 227.**

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The book, *Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: New Technologies and Challenges to Sustainable Peace*, addresses an issue that is of vital importance to Pakistan and South Asia. It looks at nuclear deterrence in South Asia. The central argument of the book is that South Asia is embroiled in systemic security dilemma. It 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. The authors have argued that the strategic pattern of security dilemma is emanating from a broader systemic security dilemma between the US and China in Asia. The authors have set the security dynamics of South Asia in a larger context where the 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. This increases uncertainty, mistrust between India and Pakistan, moving the two nuclear armed states into yet more crises and military conflicts.

Chapter one of the book focuses on how the complex quadrilateral relationship between the US, China, India and Pakistan lead to the creation of systemic security dilemma. It covers the holistic scenarios whereby evolving technologies, shifting doctrines and deterrent forces of these four countries feed into the security dynamics. It determines how the strategic behaviour of these countries is geo-politically and geo-economically interlinked. It looks at the chain reaction among these four states. The competition between China and US intensifies the security dilemma driven military and technological competition in South Asia.

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Chapter two draws a link between the growing Indo-US strategic partnership and regional stability. It investigates the kind of technologies India is procuring from the US and its allies against the backdrop of India-US nuclear deal of 2008. It finds that Indo-US strategic partnership thus promotes the spiral of arms competition between India and Pakistan and negatively impacts strategic stability.

Chapter three looks at India's evolving nuclear strategy and concludes that it is revisiting its nuclear doctrine to achieve regional power status. It is driven both by its military and political goals. The new technologies that India is introducing into its nuclear forces includes development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear submarines, submarine launched ballistic missiles, Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV) technology, aircraft carriers, anti-submarine systems, drones, battlefield nuclear weapons and an increase in its fissile material production capabilities. The authors argue that this makes India more assertive in South Asian nuclear politics. It falls in line with US Pivot to Asia Policy, whereby it helps counterbalance China. At the same time, it exacerbates the security dilemma with Pakistan. The authors contend that Indian force modernisation would not remain consistent with minimum deterrence doctrine articulated in 1999 and 2003. It is now moving towards No First Use and a posture of massive retaliation.

Chapter four studies Pakistan's nuclear strategy in the context of changed South Asian security environment. It debates whether Pakistan is looking for parity with India or balancing it and finds that it strives to maintain a balance rather than parity with India under the principle of minimum deterrence. Pakistan has tried to plug the deterrence gap where it is absolutely essential, thus the concept of full spectrum deterrence. Also it looks at whether its nuclear force development remains consistent with minimum deterrence. It argues that ambiguity in Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has served a purpose but too much ambiguity can be counterproductive.

Chapter five argues that nature and dynamics of crises are changing in South Asia. While nuclear deterrence has prevented large-scale war, it has not prevented crises. If anything, frequency of crises and war would be accelerated. India's pursuit of escalation dominance would create more challenges for Pakistan and make war more likely. This, the authors argue, puts more pressure on nuclear deterrence.

In chapter six, the authors suggest innovative ways to prevent crises since the stakes are very high and the region cannot afford to descend into a nuclear exchange. They offer innovative ways to stabilise deterrence and promote sustainable peace in South Asia. They suggest unilateral, bilateral and multilateral avenues to prevent war and bring peace to the region. These include reducing over-reliance on nuclear weapons, avenues to avoid accidental nuclear war and adopting policies of accommodation to break out of the vicious cycle of security dilemma.

This book is timely because tensions are high after India's termination of the autonomous status of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir. India is openly threatening the adoption of India's "No First Use" (NFU) policy. It looks like 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. This is very 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. The present book helps us better understand the dynamics of nuclear deterrence that is at a critical impasse. It put things in perspective by contextualising the India-Pakistan deterrence in wider regional and global setting.

The book makes a powerful argument that South Asian security dilemma is exacerbated by the larger regional and global security dilemmas and is underpinned by technological advancements. It has merit to it and provides us with fresh insights into the dynamics of nuclear deterrence in South Asia. It contributes to the literature on South Asian security on multiple levels including strategic, political and economic. It is a valuable contribution on the issue of South Asian nuclear deterrence where there is a dearth of Pakistani writers. The book offers a wealth of information and can be an essential guide to policy makers, academics and students of international relations and strategic studies alike.