Critical Issues Facing South Asia

Politics, Security & Non-Traditional Challenges

Edited by Dr. Khurram Abbas

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Dr. Khurram Abbas

India Study Centre
Institute of Strategic Studies
Islamabad

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Dedicated to Next Generation Experts

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Acronyms

Anti-Satellite Technology (ASAT)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Asian Cricket Council (ACC)

Association of East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Australian Group (AG)

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS)

Azad Jammy & Kashmir (AJK)

Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)

Ballistic Missile Defence Systems (BMDS)

Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)

Nuclear Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBN)

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)

Canada India Reactor Utility Services (CIRUS)

Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Computing (CENTAIC)

Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR)

Chief of Army Staff (COAS)

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN)

Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)

Cognitive Technology (CT)

Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR)

Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC)

Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM)

Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD)

Court of Arbitration (CoA)

Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI)

Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC)

Defence Artificial Intelligence Project Agency (DAIPA)

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of Space (DoS)

DRDO Young Scientist Laboratory (DYSL)

Export Control Regime (ECR)

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)

Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD)

General Electric (GE)

Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT)

Group of Governmental Experts (GGE)

HCCBMP

Higher Education Commission (HEC)

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)

Home Made Explosives (HME)

Improvised Explosive Device (IED)

Indian Airforce (IAF)

Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)

Indo-Pak Cultural and Art Corridor (IPCAC)

Indo-Pak Cultural and Art Corridor (IPCAC)

Indus Basin (IB)

Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)

Institute of Space and Planetary Astrophysics (ISPA)

Integrated Deterrence (ID)

Integrated Deterrence Strategy (IDS)

Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR)

Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR)

Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP)

Islamic State (IS)

Islamic State Khorasan (ISK)

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD)

Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs)

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systme (LAWS)

Line of Control (LOC)

Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

Million Acres Feet (MAF)

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)

Multi-Utility Legged Equipment (MULE)

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

National Centre for Artificial Intelligence (NCAI)

National Security Policy (NSP)

No First Use Policy (NFU)

No Objection Certificate (NOC)

Non-Aligned Ministerial (NAM)

Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT)

Nuclear Non-Weapon States (NNWS)

Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs)

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

Nuclear Weapon States (NWS)

Pakistan Institute of Science & Technology (PIST)

Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA)

Pakistan Navy (PN)

Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD)

Parliamentary Institute for Development and Transparency (PILDAT)

Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE)

Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)

Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)

Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence and Computing (PIAIC)

Prevention of an Arms Race in Space (PAROS)

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Research and Development (R&D)

Short Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM)

Small and Modular Reactor (SMR)

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

South Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SANWFZ)

Space Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO)

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR)

Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 Status (STA-1 Status)

SUPARCO Institute of Technical Training (SITT)

Submarine Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM)

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Transpacific Partnership (TPP)

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas (UNCLOS)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDR)

United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)

United States (US)

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)

Unmanned Vehicle (UV)

US-India AI Initiative (USIAI)

War on Terror (WOT)

Wargame Research and Development Centre (WARDEC)

Wassenaar Arrangement

World Bank (WB)

Foreword

Amidst the geopolitical and technological evolution at the regional and global level, South Asian countries remain entangled in multiple issues, stymieing the prospects of South Asia emerging as an integrated region. Against that backdrop, it is a real pleasure to introduce the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)'s latest publication, Critical Issues Facing South Asia: Political, Security and Non-Traditional Challenges. This book, a collection of insightful papers authored by young experts from Pakistan, illustrates the dedication as well as innovative and forward-looking work of the Institute's India Study Centre (ISC).

In today's rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, the voices of the youth are often obscured; yet their perspectives are indispensable for a holistic understanding of contemporary issues. The initiative to engage young scholars in this discourse not only underscores the importance of inclusivity in the policy process but also highlights the innovative and futuristic approach that is vital for addressing the region's complex challenges. Engaging the youth more deeply is also a part of the ISSI's new vision.

South Asia stands at a critical juncture, grappling with a myriad of political, security, and non-traditional challenges including inter-state conflict, terrorism, and misunderstanding of the usage of Artificial Intelligence. Recent developments have underscored both the volatility and dynamism inherent in the region. This book provides an in-depth analysis of a range of such challenges, offering fresh insights and innovative solutions from the perspectives of young scholars and experts. The geopolitical manoeuvring by major powers, often referred to as the "New Great Game," adds another layer of complexity to South Asia's security dynamics. The book highlights the role of major powers, including the U.S., China and Russia, in shaping the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. This influence is closely linked with India's astro-politics, where space endeavours have become a new frontier for strategic competition. The implications of India's space policies for regional security, especially for Pakistan, highlight the importance of both competition and potential cooperation in this emerging domain.

Moreover, nuclear diplomacy remains central to regional stability in South Asia, particularly given the historical tensions and ongoing security dilemmas between India and Pakistan. The book underscores the delicate balance of power that nuclear capabilities entail, advocating for sustained diplomatic engagement and international cooperation to prevent escalation. This discussion naturally extends to the realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI), where advancements offer both opportunities and risks for enhancing strategic stability. The integration of AI into national defence strategies must be approached with ethical considerations and a commitment to maintaining regional peace.

Along with these traditional security issues, South Asia is also affected by new and emerging non-traditional security threats and challenges which are of serious concern – such as climate change, environmental degradation, and water conflict between Pakistan and India. Indeed, India has sought to open another arena for confrontation through its belligerent rhetoric and actions amidst formidable risks emanating from climate change. The book affirms the importance of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a long-standing framework for water-sharing, that faces challenges demanding cooperative management to prevent future disputes. This theme ties into the broader discussion of how resource disputes are politicized, reflecting the complex interplay of environmental and political factors in regional stability.

This book is an important resource for national experts, academicians, and lay readers. It is valuable because it not only diagnoses the pressing issues facing South Asia but also offers pathways to navigate the complexities of the region in pursuit of peace and stability. The breadth and depth of the topics covered in this volume illustrate the multifaceted nature of the challenges South Asia faces and the new and practical approaches needed to address them.

As the Director General ISSI, I have always appreciated the India Study Centre for its proactive efforts to cover South Asia through diverse and innovative initiatives. The Centre's commitment to engaging the youth in these important conversations is particularly commendable. By giving a platform to young experts,

the Centre not only enriches the discourse but also ensures that future policy frameworks are informed by fresh and dynamic perspectives.

I extend my sincere felicitations to the authors and the editorial team led by Dr. Khurram Abbas for their excellent contributions and to the India Study Centre for its commitment to excellence. This work stands as a testament to the power of youth engagement and the vital role of inclusive dialogue in shaping the future of South Asia.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood

Director General

Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad

June 2024

Introduction

Dr. Khurram Abbas*

With a population of 2 billion, South Asia is one of the most populous regions of the world.[1] Apart from its geographical, strategic and economic significance, there is a demographic salience of this region. There is nearly 60 per cent population under the age of 30 years, which makes South Asia as one of the youngest regions of the world. This youthfulness brings immense hope and challenges. This edited volume is based on research of young academics who are actively influencing the discourse on important issues impacting the South Asian region, especially Pakistan.

The young researchers with a diversified background have covered several important contemporary issues regarding security, strategic stability and non-traditional challenges. In this era of emerging technologies and information revolution, the nature of political, security and non-traditional issue is also transforming. Terrorist organizations are luring in new human resource through digital media as well as adopting new technologies readily available in the market. The militarization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have profound impact on the strategic stability of South Asian region. Likewise, the non-traditional challenges such as water scarcity due to climate change has been exacerbated due to hydro-extremism. As youth defined by its energy and creativity, the authors have also provided creative solutions to the challenges and issues facing South Asia, especially Pakistan.

The extremism and terrorism have affected thousands of lives across the globe. In South Asia, terrorism remains one of the most persistent issues for past several decades. Pakistan and Afghanistan are most affected countries due the menace of terrorism. Pakistan has sacrificed over 80,000 lives and faced a staggering US150 billion direct and indirect economic losses since

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[1] South Asian population, https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/southern-asia-population/

2001. [2] The psychological and social impact of terrorism incalculable. For the past two decades, terrorist organisations largely adopted kinetic approach of terrorism. Naturally, Pakistan armed forces also responded with kinetic approaches to counter this menace of terrorism. Since 2007, Pakistan has launched several kinetic counter-terrorism operations such as Operation Rah-e-Rast, Operation Rah-e-Nijat, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Operation Radd-ul-Fassad, etc.[3] However, the nature of terrorism and approaches to execute operations and disseminate the terror activities has transformed in 21st century. Social media has become one of the most effective tools to disseminate message to young generation. Therefore, studies are required to research dynamics and explore counter-measures to this emerging trend in security domain.

One of the dominant features of South Asia is Indo-Pakistan rivalry, due to protracted dispute of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). This rivalry has covered almost all domains, i.e., strategic, political and territorial. Therefore, the strategic advancements, weapons procurements and weapons development, building partnerships at regional and international level leads to stability-instability paradox. The recent years developments such as Indian strategic partnership with the US and its aspiration to be the net security provider of Indian Ocean Region (IOR), embracing Artificial Intelligence in Indian Armed forces, and the development of Anti-Satellite kinetic weapons by India have disturbed the balance of power in South Asian region.[4] These developments coupled with Indian political leadership's aggressive and outrageous statements have compelled Pakistan to respond Indian aggressive posture. Hence, the region is prone

[2] Khurshid Ahmad, "War on terror has cost Pakistan more than $150bn in losses since 9/11, officials say", Arab News, September 12, 2021. https://arab.news/zt78q

[3] Muzamil Ahmad Dar, "Pakistan's counter-militant offensive: A critical evaluation of operation Radd-ul-Fasaad", International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2019; 1(1): 33-34; Dawn News, "Pakistan Army launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country", February 22, 2017. https://www.dawn.com/news/1316332

[4] Doris Elin Urrutia, "India's Anti-Satellite Missile Test Is a Big Deal. Here's Why.", Space.com, August 10, 2022. https://www.space.com/india-anti-satellite-test-significance.html

to another series of competitions in emerging technologies and weapons acquisition, etc.

Another aspect of India-Pakistan rivalry is related to tensions on water distribution issues. For the past two decades, New Delhi has been trying to use water as a weapon to influence Pakistan's foreign policy decisions related to Jammu and Kashmir, India and South Asia. This is why, it has constructed several controversial dams such as Baglihar, Kishanganga, Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project, Ratle Hydroelectric Project to store and divert water according to its convenience. Similarly, a recent instance of hydro-extremism could be witnessed when India diverted Ravi river's water from Pakistan to India. Shahpur Kandi Dam and Ranjit Sagar Dam also known as Thein Dam were source of contention between the two countries that were being built by India on Ravi River. Hence, the hydro-extremism of India is becoming imminent threat to Pakistan's water security. Therefore, studies are required over the forecasts and possibilities of armed conflict due to such provocative policies on water by New Delhi.

In this context, this book has been divided into three parts to cover aforementioned issues through rigorous research. Part-1 is based on the studies of changing nature of terrorism and adoption of emerging technologies that will have far reaching implications. The first chapter **"Evaluating the Possible Use of Drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) for Terrorism in Pakistan and Way Forward"** analyzes the potential of commercial drones to be used for terrorism in Pakistan. Commercial drones of various specifications and designs are readily available in Pakistan. These drones could be used for various terrorist activities including surveillance, reconnaissance, and payload delivery. A historical analysis of the use of commercial drones by different terrorist organizations around the world for their activities is also carried out in this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter also undertakes an in-depth study of the nomenclature, specifications, and categorization related to commercial drones. A focus is laid on the possible ways in which commercial drones could be employed by terrorist organizations in Pakistan. To offer actionable and proactive measures to counter the challenge of commercial drones, the chapter undertakes primary research on the availability of commercial drones in Pakistan. Finally, the chapter

also examines the existing legal and regulatory framework of Pakistan on commercial drones and offers recommendations for the future.

The second chapter titled **"Media Manipulation and Radicalization: Unraveling Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)"** focuses on evolving strategies of terrorist organization to disseminate propaganda for potential recruits in the youth. Following its inception in 2007, TTP was largely operationalising its attacks through the traditional and hard power domain, including its suicide attacks, IEDs blasts and targeting schools, mosques and security installations. However, following the fall of Kabul and subsequent establishment of interim government of Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, there has been a major paradigm shift in the organization and operational activities of the TTP. This time, their warfare strategy has incorporated soft power as a tool against the state than primarily relying on the hard and traditional power. This research explores the evolving strategies and dynamics of the TTP in their soft power domain and how they use social media as a tool to disseminate their propaganda and convince people to join them against Pakistan.

The second part of the book presents four chapters covering various aspects of strategic stability in South Asia. The chapter **"South Asian Nuclear Diplomacy in the Age of Social Media"** explores the impact of social media on nuclear diplomacy in South Asia, focusing on the enduring tensions between India and Pakistan. While revisiting the historical context of nuclear diplomacy of Pakistan and India, the chapter highlights the transitional phase of India and Pakistan from seeking peaceful nuclear technology to acquiring nuclear weapons. The chapter has also examined the role of social media, particularly Twitter in nuclear diplomacy, illustrated through case studies like the BrahMos missile incident and the Balakot/Pulwama crisis. The chapter also investigates the nuclear nationalism driven by the Modi-led BJP and its role in political expediency. The chapter concludes that Twitter debates during the Balakot/Pulwama crisis indirectly contributed to nuclear escalation, with a prevalence of hawkish sentiments in Indian tweets.

The second chapter of the part two of the book titled **"Artificial Intelligence and South Asian Strategic Stability"** attempts to build an understanding of how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could affect the strategic stability in South Asia. Firstly, the chapter explains the two fundamental concepts at the heart of this discussion: the definition of strategic stability in the age of AI, and the vast military applications of AI. Building on these concepts, the chapter then focuses on South Asia, and analyses the current Indian militarization of AI. By analysing India's major AI-related strategic documents, current military deployment of AI systems, and its future ambitions, the chapter argues that India has already begun the process of adapting its military for the coming AI revolution. The chapter then attempts to understand how this AI revolution could impact South Asian strategic stability, both in the short and long-term. The chapter concludes by offering a practical way forward for Pakistan which may help Islamabad in maintaining strategic stability with India.

The next chapter titled "**The New Great Game and South Asian Dilemma: Analyzing the Implications of US Integrated Deterrence on South Asian Strategic Environment"** highlights that the global policy of Integrated Deterrence adopted by United States. As the US aims to strengthen its allies and partners abroad to contain China through a more holistic approach, this strategy will have far reaching implication for strategic stability of South Asia. Through in-depth analysis of policy documents of US and analyzing the key literature on subject, the chapter explores the spillover effect of US Integrated Deterrence Strategy on South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular thereby understanding the challenges to stability and deterrence. The chapter suggests that Pakistan should focus on new trends in warfare and cutting-edge technologies by collaborating with major players in these domains. Pakistan should collaborate with both China and US in research and development and establish the critical infrastructure required for cyberspace and space to cultivate experts from within. Political stability, coupled with economic growth and progress in Research and Development can be the way forward looking at the present dynamics of South Asia and Pakistan' status in New Great Game.

The last chapter of the part two of the **book "India's Astro-politics: A Security Dilemma for Pakistan"** offers unique perspective regarding Indian space militarization and its impact for Pakistan. The chapter argues that space emerged as a realm of competition during the Cold War which compelled the states to join space race. Indian space program has evolved into a military program over the decades. The development of Anti-Satellite kinetic weapons by India disturbed the balance of power equation in South Asia. India's test of anti-satellite weapon became a reason of a new generation of security dilemma for Pakistan. It questions the nuclear deterrence of Pakistan, making India confident for leaving its 'No First Use Policy' of nuclear weapons. Moreover, Pakistan has concerns regarding space debris and weaponization of space. India also signed Artemis Accords with the U.S which provides an edge to India and increases its international clout. This overall situation leaves Pakistan in a security dilemma that it is trying to avoid by releasing the first National Space Policy of Pakistan to fulfil its Space Vision 2047.

The third part of the book contains four chapters of traditional and non-traditional security challenges. The first chapter of part three titled **"Cultural Bridges to Shared Security: A Soft Power Approach to Non-Traditional Threat Management between India and Pakistan"** offers insights into cultural cooperation between the two South Asian arch-rivals Pakistan and India. The chapter argues that historically complex relationship between India and Pakistan has been marred by political challenges, limiting collaboration. However, non-traditional challenges like water scarcity and climate change present opportunities for fostering closer ties through cultural initiatives. This chapter has also explored shared histories, cultural affinities, and common problems, advocating cultural interactions as tools for confidence-building and bilateral cooperation. Despite border restrictions, strong people-to-people connections highlight the potential of soft power in bridging divides. The proposed Indo-Pak Cultural and Art Corridor (IPCAC), featuring institutions like the Indo-Pak Film Centre and Indo-Pak Art, Culture, and Folk Centre, aims to facilitate cultural exchanges. Policy recommendations focus on public diplomacy, resource sharing, and capacity building, demonstrating how cultural initiatives can break prejudices and aid in joint disaster management, such as post-earthquake relief

in Kashmir in 2005 and flood management in Gujarat in 2017. The chapter offers practical recommendations for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to achieve shared security and understanding in South Asia, promoting regional peace and prosperity.

The next chapter of part three of the book **"The possibility of Water Conflict between India and Pakistan: Critical Analysis of Bhartiya Janata Party's policies"** explores the potential for water conflict between Pakistan and India, with a special focus on the potential influence of the BJP government under the leadership of Narendra Modi. It determines how the hydro-extremism of India poses an existential threat to Pakistan and how it eventually disrupts regional stability. This study also highlights the ultra-nationalist stance of BJP government, with a primary focus on amending the Indus Water Treaty through the Permanent Indus Commission in order to further challenge Pakistan's control over its water resources. The strong political position of the BJP leading up to the elections of 2024 suggests continued non-traditional warfare in the Indus Basin, exacerbating the chances of a water conflict. The recent actions, like the Kishanganga hydroelectric project explicitly exemplify the malicious intentions of India to have control over water resources of Pakistan. With Pakistan anticipated to experience water scarcity by 2025 and hydro-extremism faced by India, the conflict over water resources emerges as a critical issue impacting the internal security of Pakistan and strategic stability of South Asia.

Chapter **"Disempowering Kashmir: Delimitation, Demographic Change, and Electoral Politics in Occupied Kashmir"** highlights major developments after the abrogation of Article 370 in IIOJK. Article 370 had guaranteed the semi-autonomous status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir but in August 2019 India abrogated this article and also tried to change the political demographic dynamics of the occupied territory. The chapter highlights that the BJP-backed delimitation panel increased six seats in the Jammu region while adding only one seat to the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley. There is a clear imbalance in population density in assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir divisions. Whereas the Muslim districts were also underrepresented in the Jammu division. Being the only Muslim

majority state in India, the BJP government tried to reshape the demographics by allowing citizenship rights to non-locals in Kashmir, which in turn will favour them in the electoral process. This chapter also tries to analyse how the BJP could try to enhance its electoral prospects, further solidifying its political influence in Kashmir and shedding light on this complex interplay between delimitation, the politics of its timing, and the demographics of Jammu and Kashmir.

The last chapter of the book titled **"Strategic Subcultures in Decision-Making Process: A Case Study of Maritime Security Policy in Pakistan"** covers extensive scholarly debate on strategic cultures and different subcultures augmented by their respective epistemic communities. The cases of the maritime security policy of Pakistan are analysed within this strategic cultural framework to find that the Pakistan Navy, as a representative actor belonging to a differing subcultural group in security policy decision-making, could only influence the security policy process when the policy proposal presented aligned with the cultural views and interests of the dominant subcultural actor i.e. the Pakistan Army. In the case of differing views among the dominant and differing actors, the policy outcome may either be ignored or negotiated in favor of the dominant actor. Whereas, any opposition to a dominant subcultural group may result in rejection of policy proposals. The findings of the chapter indicate that the security decision-making process may be affected in response to changing regional stability and in turn may also affect the regional stability due to the decisions undertaken.

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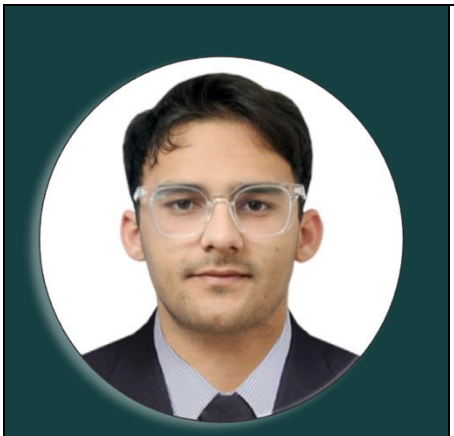

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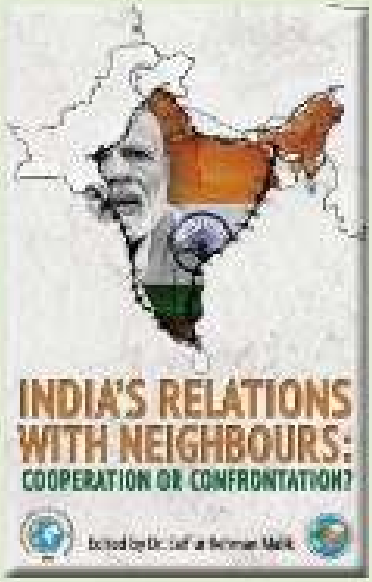

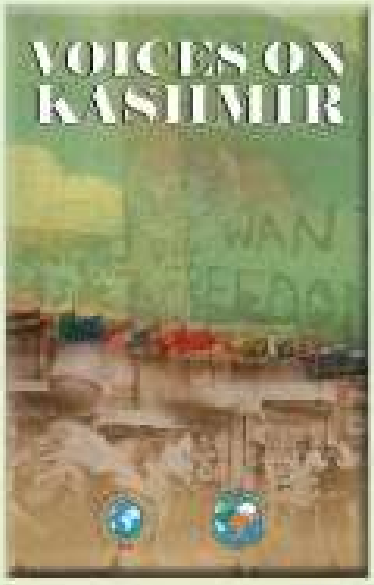

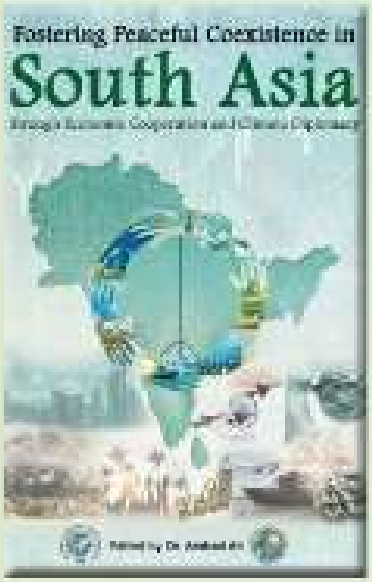

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