

**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Assessing the Ramifications of the Indo-US Nuclear Agreement on Pakistan's Regional Standing

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**ABSTRACT**

The study explores the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal and evaluates its multiple ramifications for Pakistan. The study peeps into the rationale behind forming the strategic partnership between India and the United States, primarily underlining geopolitical, economic and security motivations that has matured nuclear agreement of 2008. This paper unpacks the concerns of Pakistan, focusing on how the deal may threaten regional stability, the way it treats countries in its nuclear policy and the power shifts in South Asia. This study is qualitative in nature with semi structured interviews from Members of parliament and academicians who contributed their viewpoint on this issue. A self -developed semi-structured interview protocol is used to conduct this study. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher. Purposive and Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from the targeted population, 07 respondents has been interviewed in order to finalize the analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the data to find recurring points and narratives connected to the nuclear deal and its significance. According to the findings, stakeholders see the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal as a factor that has shaken the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, given India a prominent position globally and minimizing Pakistan in terms of its influence. The study brings attention to issues in Pakistan's capacity related to handling of international affairs and its policy approach. The research concludes by suggesting that foreign policy in Pakistan should be reassessed, strategic communication strengthened and more resources put towards improving diplomatic alliances and nuclear transparency systems.

**Keywords:** Civil Nuclear Deal, Strategic Partnerships, Arms Race, Containment Policy, Non-Proliferation, Global Nuclear Governance, Regional Hegemony

**Introduction**

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia has been significantly altered by the evolution of US-India relationship, particularly concerning its neighbors. In this context, Pakistan has become vulnerable in various manners as the joint military exercises and technology transfers between India and the US poses threat to regional security (Yaseen, et. al., 2016). The hostility between India and Pakistan has been evident since 1947 when India became dismembered. India's conventional military capabilities exceed those of Pakistan. On the other side, the nuclear capabilities of both states have created a balance of power that has deterred full-scale war; the nuclear pact of year 2005 with the U.S. has disrupted this balance, making the region more prone to escalating tensions (Mohan, Koh, & Sung-Joo, 2008). The collaboration in the domain of the enhancing missile technology and extending space cooperation further raises several concerns related to role of international community to ensure peace and security in the region. It is evident that if a big stakeholder like USA if concentrates only pouring more resources to already resourceful country, it would increase the vulnerability of neighboring countries and when it comes to south Asia, Pakistan is more

vulnerable than any other country for Indo-Pak long standing rivalry since the independence in 1947.

The research paper under review is discussing the nuclear deal between India and the United States that has enabled India to acquire maximum level of nuclear facilities importation from the United States. Simultaneously, it is further exposing how the inclination of regional power balance in favor of India and has influenced the nuclear policy decisions in the region. As it has been observed that increasing cooperation of United states in the south Asian region has enabled India to acquire more missile material for energy production and the advancement of nuclear arsenals of India which has many countries in the region specially Pakistan to align with the regional super power to contain the influence of Indian hegemony (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Therefore, the research study has addressed the queries related to armed race in the region specifically how Indo-US deals excluded Pakistan and how such exclusion has made Pakistan looking for other avenues and windows of opportunities to counterbalance in the region. As such geopolitical context created opportunities for strengthening Pak-China ties and China emerged as the sole supporter of Pakistan in matters related to enhancement of Pakistan's nuclear capacity (Ain, et. al., (2024).

The civilian nuclear accord between the United States and India announced in 2005 also quoted as the 123 agreement marks a notable shift in the U.S. Policy direction for South Asia. Both countries are pursuing their interests from this deal. The objective of the U.S. behind this initiative was to offset China's growing presence in the region. As noted by Joseph Cirincione, top expert of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "The crux of this announcement is what it tells us about the US grand strategy, and that behind whatever else is going on here the US is preparing for a grand conflict with China and constructing an anti-China coalition, In that scenario, India is even more valuable as a nuclear power, rather than as a non-nuclear count" (Haider, 2015) clearly showing the interest of U.S. behind this deal with India. The agreement has widespread implications for India, the U.S. and the broader South Asian region, particularly Pakistan.

Three years of thorough negotiations linking Indian and American government leaders produced this historical political accord. The talks between Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush started on July 18, 2005, to establish a preliminary agreement about a civil atomic energy partnership. This initial agreement aimed at fostering the advancement of nuclear energy and ensuring energy security for India internationally. During President Bush's 2006 visit to India, a preliminary nuclear agreement was signed in New Delhi on March 2, 2006, marking the beginning of the next major stage in the civil nuclear accord. This agreement laid the foundation for further negotiations and legal adjustments necessary for its implementation.

To transform the plans into reality, in December 2006, the Hyde Act was enacted by the US Congress. With the approval of this legislation, significant non-proliferation-related legal barriers were lifted, enabling US nuclear technology transfer to India. On July 27, 2007, both nations finalized the provisions of their agreement with the adoption of the Hyde Act. The final deal includes modifications to Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act of 1954, that's why it is sometimes referred to as the "123 Agreement." The requirements for civilian nuclear cooperation with foreign nations are outlined in Section 123, along with the modifications that made it possible for the United States to work with India in this capacity. The most vulnerable state because of this agreement is Pakistan because of its strategic depth. The pact may lead to an escalation of arms buildup in the South Asian region. Pakistan might feel compelled to upgrade its own nuclear arsenal and capabilities to maintain strategic balance with India. Pakistan felt excluded after this agreement as the U.S. reoriented its approach towards India and showed indifference to Pakistan's efforts to seek

a similar nuclear agreement with the U.S. leading to diplomatic friction and a sense of marginalization in regional geopolitics (Jamal, 2015). The agreement highlighted the need for Pakistan to search for alternative energy sources and strengthen its own civil nuclear program to address energy security and economic development challenges (Tellis, News Article, 2023).

India-US Civil Nuclear Deal (2008) marked a significant shift in global nuclear politics by granting India access to civilian nuclear technology and fuel despite not being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While the deal strengthened US-India strategic relations and supported India's energy needs, it raised serious concerns for Pakistan regarding regional stability, security, and strategic parity (Yaseen, et. al., 2022).

Pakistan, also a non-NPT nuclear state, viewed the deal as discriminatory, arguing that it legitimized India's nuclear program while leaving Pakistan isolated. This perception exacerbated Pakistan's security dilemma, fearing an expanding Indian nuclear arsenal under the deal's

### **Literature Review**

It has been thoroughly examined by a number of research scholars regarding the changes made in the defense capabilities of Pakistan and its foreign policy shift in the changing dynamics of geopolitical landscape of the South Asian region. According to Bukhari, the strategic partnership between the United States and India has significant implications on Pakistan. The security vulnerability of Pakistan has increased due to the military cooperation of America with India. It has been analyzed that the advancements of the nuclear arsenals, and technology materials have the potential to threaten the national security of Pakistan. The balance of power can be destroyed by this partnership and has the capacity to make India the regional hegemon. Moreover, it has the potential to impact the political and economic stability of Pakistan. It has further analyzed the impact of India attaining the position of permanent member of United Nations Security Council on Pakistan that will impose complexity to the Kashmir issue, influencing the position of Pakistan at international level. However, the study lacks the exploration of Pakistan's shift in the nuclear policy and the impact of Pakistan's emerging nuclear doctrine on the South Asian region (Bukhari, 2011).

The importance of India as a key strategic partner of the United States in the South Asian region has been emphasized by researchers including Ms. Farooq, Ms. Kazmi and Ms. Javed. They elaborated that both states share the same vision and school of thought related to democratic principle as well as the containment of terrorism. The strategic aim of both states has always been to curb the influence of China in the South Asian region and at international level. Thus, both states have similar ambitions regarding the financial and strategic stronghold, where India wants to maintain its regional hegemonic position and the United States wants to preserve its status of world super power. Various articles further explore the various dimensions on which India and United States are thinking to collaborate for each other gains. Moreover, the nuclear deterrence maintained by Pakistan in response the Indian accumulation of conventional modernized technology have been further shattered. It has been suggested that the government of Pakistan must maintain cordial relations with the regional allies and efforts should be done to maintain its internal economic stability to counter the threat of India and the US cooperation on its security. However, the previous studies failed to incorporate the elements of realist thought and the shift in the nuclear and strategic policies of Pakistan. It further lacked to highlight the implications this partnership will have on the South Asian region as a whole (Farooq, Kazmi, & Javed, 2018).

Fani explains the strategic alliance formulated by India and the United States after the tragic events of September 2001 in the wake of terrorism. The role of United States

emerged as the sole captain of the ship in the political and military power game. The United States got a foothold in the region of South Asia due to its long-term ambitions. It further highlights the impact of globalization on India, that shifted its traditional approach of socialism towards the emerging realm of economic liberalism, which made it more inclined to avail the opportunity of partnership with the United States in order to strengthen its economic and military capabilities. The article focuses on the ripple effects of this agreement on Pakistan and its reaction to this accord. However, it did not explain the potential of Pakistan's response in the face of US alliance with India. Moreover, the implications of the South Asian region were not discussed in this article (Fani, 2007).

The missile and space cooperation between India and the United States have been discussed by intellectuals emphasizing on the enhanced civil nuclear cooperation between the states. The study conducted by Ahmad and Gul has utilized the framework of offensive realism and has explored the dynamics of strategic partnership between the states in the context of complex interdependence. Thus, it holds the view that this partnership has led India to practice its external relations aggressively and the main agenda of the United States has been the containment of the influence of Chinese communism in the South Asian region. The study further reveals the role of India after its cooperation with the United States as the guardian of the gates of South Asia. The authors hold the view that the partnership has led to the imbalance of power causing threat to the security dynamics of the region. However, the study failed to analyze the changing dynamics of the South Asia due to the evolving nuclear policy shift of Pakistan in response to US-India relationship (Ahmad & Gul, 2021).

Authors have analyzed the rationales behind the US-Indo civil nuclear deal to comprehend the evolution of the regional role of India. For instance, Darshana discusses three significant factors contributing to the Indo-US strategic partnership. The first rationale has been the threat of Chinese influence over the Indo-Pacific Ocean due to the Belt and Road initiative. Moreover, the navigation liberty of China in South China Sea has the potential to restrict the presence of international naval capacities into these waters (Afzal, et. al., 2020). Thus, the article highlights the implications of the alliance between India and US on the regional security dynamics of South Asia, and the emerging role of India in this change of event. Nevertheless, this article provides insight into the regional aspects, it failed to cover the regional political landscape in the perspective of Pakistan (Baruah, 2015).

Similarly, research has shown that the civil nuclear deal has profound implications on the state of Pakistan where the possibility of regional nuclear alliance between Pakistan and China in response to the US-India strategic alliance have been explored. Moreover, the nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan already been done in the shape of establishment of Chashma reactors have been highlighted by scholars. As Lele (2006) highlights the indifferent and unconcerned behavior of United States of America towards Pakistan's nuclear capacity building, that enabled Pakistan more inclined towards China to fulfill its nuclear energy needs. Moreover, Pakistan demands for the similar treatment by the US has been neglected by America, further distancing both nations from each other. However, the studies overlooked the impacts of Pakistan's changing nuclear policy on the South Asian region (Lele, 2006).

Akhtar and Bano introduces a more comprehensive lens by linking the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and rising concerns of US and India for their strategic partnership. It has been argued that the socio-political landscape of not only the region but the whole world as well in the shape of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. It further elaborates the fundamental rationale behind the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and has comparatively analyzed the US-India strategic partnership alongside China-Pakistan alliance. Similarly, the impact of US and India strategic alliance on the CPEC, and Belt and Road Initiative as a whole has been highlighted by scholars. Thus, the authors have shed light on the changing geopolitical dynamics of the world owing to the quadrilateral relationship to influence the opponent (Akhtar & Bano, 2021).

## **Material and Methods**

The research study primarily assesses the influence of the Indo-US nuclear deal on Pakistan. Simultaneously, the research study has further peep into the rising trend and tendency of conflict and cooperation in the region. The study is qualitative in nature to study the India-US civil nuclear deal and its impacts on Pakistan. In qualitative methodology, researchers deal with the themes conceptually and analytically.

## **Research Design**

The study was exploratory in nature with qualitative method to reach the desired results. Semi- Structured interview conducted from experts in Pakistan to collect primary data and all the published material considered for secondary data collection.

## **Population and sampling of the study**

Purposive and Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from the targeted population. The purpose of choosing this sampling technique is to target only those participants who will fulfill the purpose of study. In this research study, 07 respondents has been interviewed in order to finalize the analysis. These stakeholders include, parliamentarians and academia.

## **Instrument of the Study**

A self -developed semi- structured interview protocol is used to conduct this study. The interview protocols are developed by the researcher based on overall aims and objectives of Indo-US strategic collaboration with referenced to Pakistan. The interview is comprising on 30-40 minutes.

## **Validity of the Content**

The validity of the instruments was assured through experts. The amendments in the interview protocols are made according to the experts' opinion. To check the reliability of tools and to collect the required information the first, interview was conducted from the desired population through adopted sampling technique. Assigned supervisor Dr. Muhammad Muzaffar requested to the Chairperson of the Department of Politics &IR of GCWU Sialkot for constitution of Instrument Validation Committee via latter number Ref,GCWUS/SKT/POL.SC/24/ on dated 26-08-2024.

## **Data collection Procedure**

Data collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with respondents through online and in person. First of all, population was approached and the consent of desired population was confirmed. Secondly, questioner was shared with the interviewees to obtain the accurate results of the study from the targeted population. The purpose of choosing this sampling technique was to target only those participants who would fulfill the purpose of study. Interviews were conducted after the committee decision on 26-9-2024 constituted for instrumentation validity.

## **Ethical Consideration**

The Research Ethical Institutional Review Board of the University in its 6<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 14-01-2025 evaluated the ethical consideration of the research project. It was found by ethical consideration committee that the researcher considered all research ethics rigorously and no physical or physiological harm to the human/animal/plant health was involved in the research. Before conducting interviews, consent of all respondents was assured. It is conveyed to the respondents that their interviews are recorded for the purpose

of analysis. Data had been kept confidential and only used for research purposes. This has been conveyed to all the respondents before taking their stance.

## Results and Discussion

### Factors that altered the geopolitical landscape in South Asia due to the Indo-US Nuclear deal

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal, which was codified in 2008, completely changed the global nuclear political and repainted the geopolitical portrait of South Asia. India's nuclear isolation was thus removed, and the partnership raised India in the status of a vital U.S. ally in the Indo-Pacific, completely changing regional power arrangements. Such transformations impacted upon the design of military forces, diplomatic engagements, and security schema in South Asia aching the regional actors the necessity of revising strategic priorities and bringing forth evolving policies which shape the region's resilience and the relations with other countries.

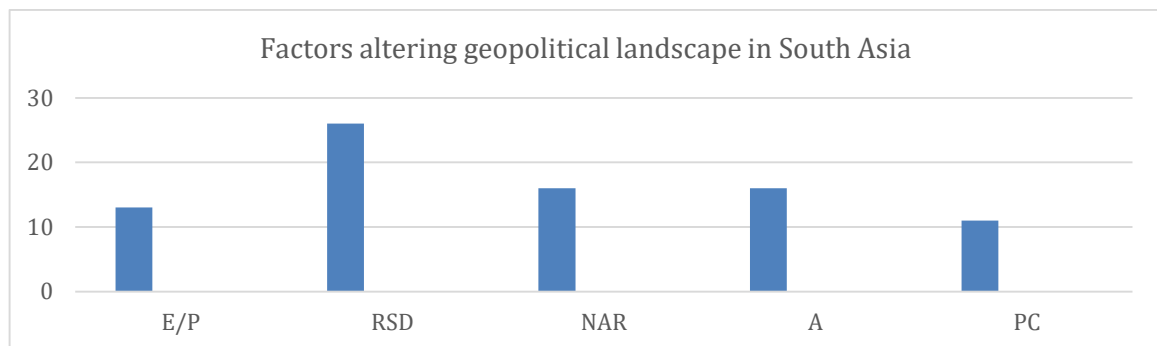


Figure 1 Factors altering geopolitical landscape in South Asia

### Economy/Poverty

The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal has deepened regional economic disparities, by favoring India and marginalizing Pakistan. The deal had severely weakened economic interdependence of South Asia mainly through the implementation of significant economic and strategic asymmetries between India and Pakistan. Notably, the nuclear accord resulted in an inflating military expenditure which cannibalized those funds that were to be allocated for human development and social welfare in curbing equity of growth and poverty. While the deal promoted India's economic resilience as well as helped integrate it with the supply chain in the region, it also disrupted businesses and weakened economic cohesion and military stratification took precedence.

### Regional Security Dynamics

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal has radically transformed the security dynamic in South Asia such that the nuclearized security environment in the region has radically increased the strategic asymmetry between India and Pakistan thus destabilizing the regionally prevailing security equilibrium. As a result, the deal has fueled regional tensions, increased the strategic divide, and made militarization due to strategic concerns louder. The development of new global hierarchies and power configurations has also aggravated the geopolitical environment and made cooperation at the regional level even more challenging. Eventually, the deal has overhauled the regional security calculus where cooperation has been substituted for competition and created a militarized region of insecurity and instability.

## **Nuclear Arms Race**

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal has greatly boosted the nuclear arms race in South Asia through heightening regional tensions and weakening the global non-proliferation efforts. Through the deal, the decision to allow India access to civilian nuclear technology without compliance to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) set a precedent of nuclear exceptionalism that stoked strategic fears in Pakistan. As a reaction, Pakistan formulated the policy of credible minimum deterrence and gradually drifted toward the full-spectrum deterrence and expanded its nuclear arsenal to preserve strategic parity. This arms buildup has spurred vertical proliferation and forced the other regional actors to rethink about their own nuclear aspirations. The deal has also undermined the global disarmament norms, adding to an unstable security setting and fueling the danger of miscalculation and warfare in an already tense part of the world.

## **Alliances**

Indo-US Nuclear Deal was the trigger for asymmetric alliances in South Asia, which triggered a radical shift of the strategic partnerships in the region. Through formalizing a robust bilateral relationship between India and the United States, the deal signified the departure from the multilateral, norm-based cooperation to interest-oriented bilateralism, thus, re-structuring regional alliances. As a response, Pakistan strengthened its strategic and military relations with China, which resulted in the distinct cleavage and deterioration of the collective security prospects. Tiny South Asian countries started re-evaluating their diplomatic alliances as a result of which a more polarized regional order emerged. This rise of such asymmetric alliances not only changed traditional loyalties and strategic perceptions but also elevated the strategic rivalry, thus, complicating the regional security architecture and decreasing prospects for cooperative regionalism.

## **Proxy Conflicts**

Indo-US Nuclear Deal has increased proxy fights in the South Asia as it has strengthened the strategic polarizations and worsened interstate rivalries in the region. This re-alignment forced Pakistan to ramp up its military and economic relations with China, such as through CPEC and coalition against India acceding to NSG. When India started to receive the recognition in the international sphere and funding, Pakistan and China saw it as a direct challenge to regional balance and continued to securitize their policies. As a result, South Asia has experienced the increase of geopolitical fragmentation with the strategic interests of great powers taking place at the cost of regional harmony, and thus leading to perpetrated proxy dynamics.

## **Threats or benefits to regional stability that were perceived to emanate from the deal**

The deal signed in 2008 was an epic change in the global nuclear diplomacy that changed the complexion of South Asian power politics. Although it was wrapped up as a move towards the promotion of clean energy and development of strategic alliances, the agreement has generated mixed feelings as to its effects on the stability of the region. On the one hand, it provided India with access to nuclear technology and world markets, on the other, it ignited interest in regional imbalance, escalation of arms race, and degradation of non-proliferation norms. The deal will be used to benefit India at the expense of other countries, thus calling for recalibrations in alliance structures, increasing security dilemma, and distracting the region from addressing poverty reduction to military preparation.

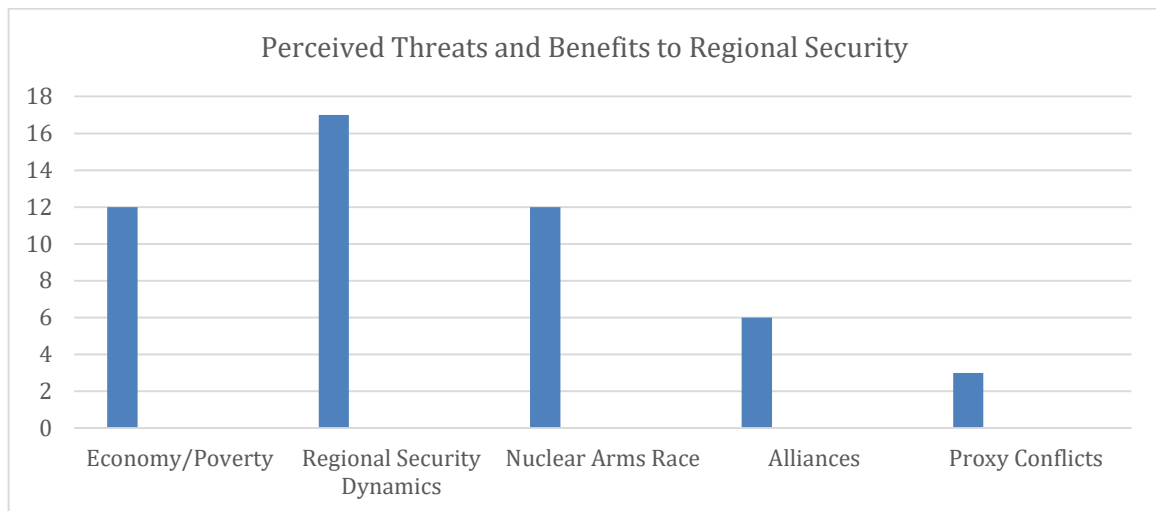


Figure 2 Perceived Threats and Benefits to Regional Security

### Noticeable shift in the political economy of the South Asia region

The U.S–India Civil Nuclear Deal of the year 2008 was a turning point in the politics of South Asia, which readjusted power balance and re-framed strategic partnerships in the region. With the legitimization of India's nuclear status out of the NPT purview. With the emergence of India as a preferred partner of the West, neighboring countries such as Pakistan and China revised their own foreign and defense policies and set precedence for new forms of economic, strategic, as well as nuclear competition in South Asia.

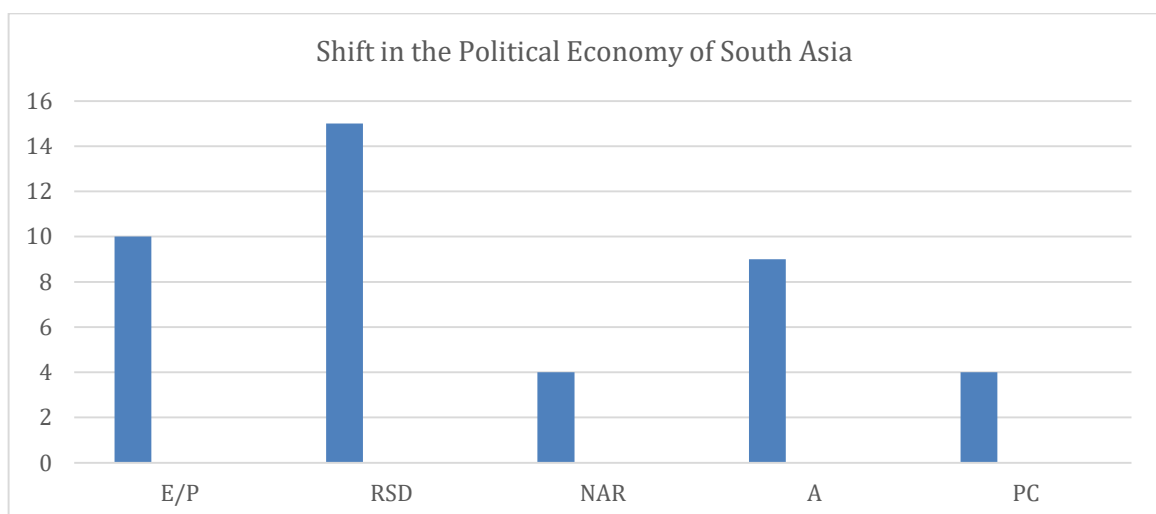


Figure 3 Shift in the Political Economy of South Asia

### Arms and military support to proxy groups as a result of the deal

The India-US civil nuclear deal has ripples well beyond the formal state relations and effects the configurations of proxy wars in South Asia and elsewhere. Although the deal is mainly concerned with the civilian use of nuclear cooperation, its overall strategic foundations have led to regional power reordering implications the consequences of which could not directly impact arming and support of proxy groups. With India's strategic partnership with the U.S. deepening up, the competing states, especially those that feel marginalized or threatened, may take asymmetrical measures which may involve the support to non-state actors, to balance the shifting of the balance of power towards India. Such a changing scenario has raised fears that the deal might fuel proxy confrontations,

especially in places where the country and its antagonists are competing, such as the country of Afghanistan or the control line with Pakistan. There is not much direct proof which could establish a connection between the deal and the escalation in proxy warfare, but the subsequent imbalance and the impression of the deal's unfairness has heated up strategic rivalry, which leads to indirect warfare.

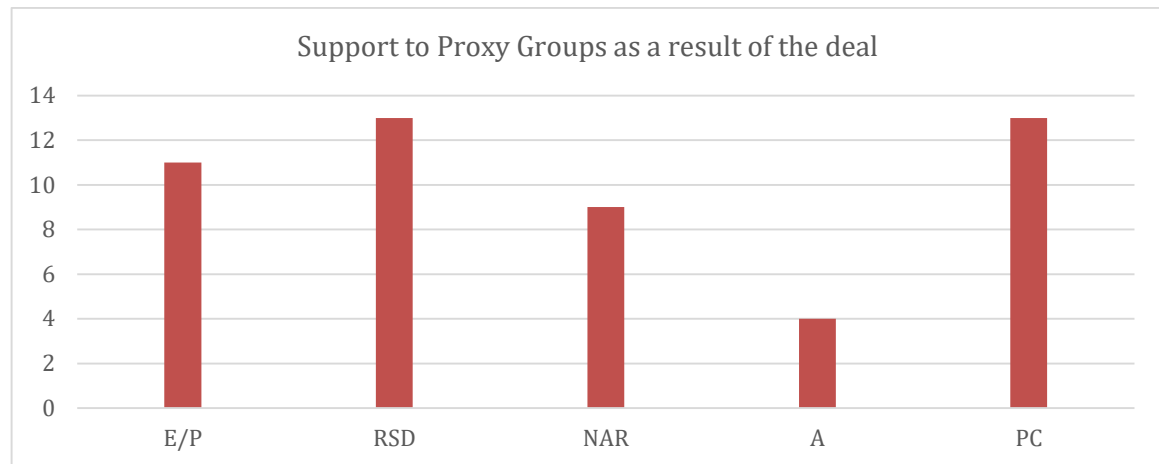


Figure 4 Support to Proxy Groups as a result of the deal

### Influence on nuclear arms race in South Asia

Although the agreement was to help facilitate civilian nuclear cooperation and help solve India's escalating energy needs, the agreement had implication-related security issues within the region. Through giving India access to sophisticated nuclear technology and fuel without conditioning it to cap or reduce its weapons program, the deal was acting as one of the many factors increasing the sense of strategic imbalance indirectly. The move has frightened the neighboring countries especially Pakistan and raised the issue of nuclear deterrence stability and triggered a nuclear arms race in the region. The deal, therefore, did not only change the geopolitical status of India on the global scale but also intensified the brittle security dynamics of South Asia.

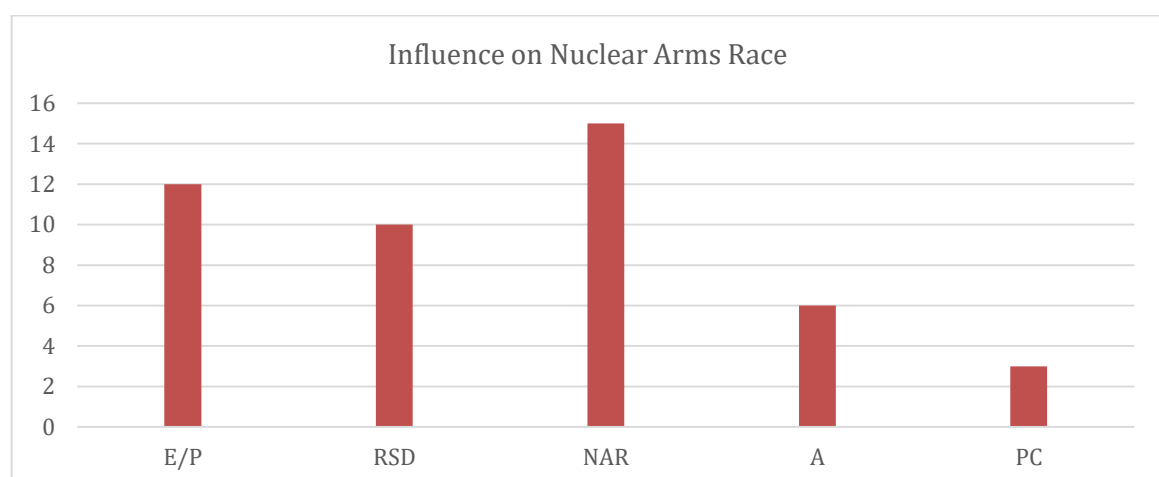


Figure 5 Influence on Nuclear Arms Race

### Measures taken by Pakistan in response to the deal

The reaction to the Indo- US Civil Nuclear Deal by Pakistan has seen a number of strategic, technological, diplomatic and doctrinal steps that it has taken in order to maintain and improve its nuclear deterrence status. This deal was considered in Pakistan as a serious

blow to the regional strategic balance. Data from interviews shows that Pakistan's efforts have not only been restricted toward military advancements but also involved nuclear doctrine changes, increased diplomacy efforts, and increased strategic relationship – especially with China. Taken together, these moves are representative of Pakistan's wider effort to counter the strategic benefits secured by the deal by India and to give credibility and durability to its nuclear deterrent in a fast-shifting regional environment.

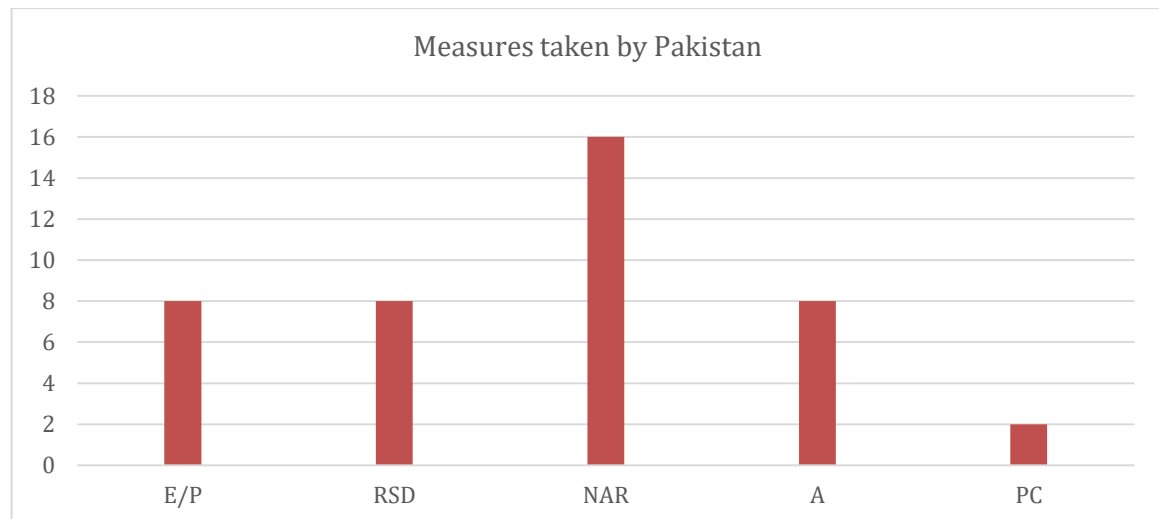


Figure 6 Measures taken by Pakistan

### Strategic Policy Shifts

Pakistan has readjusted its nuclear policy as a result of the Indo-US nuclear deal, by codifying and developing the theory of Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD). This policy action is an acknowledgment of a strategic change from minimum credible deterrence to more aggressive posture that embraces all levels of conflict: tactical, operational and strategic. Interviewees underlined that FSD aspires to neutralize India conventional and nuclear edge, especially with reference to India's Cold Start Doctrine. Pakistan sent signals by reducing its nuclear threshold that it will retaliate any aggression in a similar measure to the one being used and this was an attempt to discourage any miscalculations by India based on its new found stronger position in terms of strategy post deal.

### Technological and Military Developments

In order to maintain its nuclear deterrence credibility, Pakistan has made a lot of investment in technology advancements particularly short ranger tactical nuclear weapons such as Nasr missile system which are utilised in the battlefield against Indian troops moving forward. Respondents observed this as an expression that Pakistan is making up the gap that is created by India's expanding conventional superiority. Additionally, the country is still modernizing its missile delivery systems such as the cruise and ballistic missiles such as Babur and Shaheen series; as it increases the range and accuracy of such platforms. These technological responses are considered to be necessary in order to guarantee second-strike potential and sustain balance of strategy.

### Diplomatic and Political Responses

Diplomatically, Pakistan has continued to raise its objections on the Indo-US deal in international meetings such as the United Nations, NPT review conferences and the IAEA meetings. Based on the interview data, Pakistan represents the deal as discriminatory and destabilizing by claiming that it weakens the global non-proliferation by rewarding India and isolating Pakistan. In return, Pakistan has put forward the quest for parity by asking for

the same nuclear deal with the US or other parties around the world, with little success, however. These diplomatic initiatives have the objectives of shedding light on the strategic lop-sidedness of the deal and legitimizing Pakistan's own nuclear needs.

### **Alliance Formation and Strategic Partnerships**

The Pakistan reaction to the deal between India and the US has also involved the deepening of the strategic ties – particularly with China. Interviewees cited that the Chinese have supported Pakistan's civilian needs in terms of energy generated by nuclear power thru construction of Chashma nuclear power plants and continued cooperation by CPEC. This increasing association becomes an energy and strategic offset to the Indo-US alignment. Furthermore, Pakistan has ventured into military ties with Russia and amped up cooperation with groups such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to find alternative alliances to strengthen its strategic position and lessen dependence on the Western powers.

### **Doctrinal Posturing and Psychological Deterrence**

The participants of an interview also talked about Pakistan's rhetorical deterrence and strategic signaling to support its determination. Public declarations from the civil and military leadership, periodic missile tests, and published nuclear-capable exercises are all looked at as psychological means to show readiness and preservation of strategic ambiguity. These serve to deter aggression in order to exhibit the readiness and capacity of Pakistan to respond to any escalation.

### **Conclusion**

The thorough analysis of Pakistan's security challenges in the rise of India US strategic partnership and the nuclear politics along with the security competition in the South Asian region highlights the fact that no state has permanent friends or foes. No state faces any legal obligation to restrain itself from indulging into new political alliances and each state pursues its own interest and ambitions. The Global political and economic landscape has been marked by an era of transforming the international alliance system where the United States and India engaged in close bilateral relationship with each other at the end of the cold war. The Strategic relationship between India and the United States depicts inequality, exclusivity and discernment in the South Asian region due to the policies made by the United States. The consequences of the strategic partnership have resulted in an imbalance of power in the South Asian region, resulting in an unfair preference for India. This has been evidenced in the developments happening in the region in the shape of aggressive Indian surgical strikes, its cold war doctrine, and the advancements in the ballistic missile defense systems, the conventional arms race and the unfair policy waivers of the nuclear supplier group and international atomic energy agency. In addition to this, the India US 123 nuclear doctrine and the enhanced cooperation of both states on the defense capabilities, India's involvement in Afghanistan and the United States efforts to make India a permanent member of the UN have significantly impacted the geopolitical landscape of the South Asian region.

The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal, despite being portrayed as a partnership focused on clean energy, has completely altered the way geopolitics now works in South Asia. Close U.S.-India ties have a wide impact on regional security, financial development, relations with other nations and how their societies think. On a high level, the deal rejects the main principle of multilateralism, giving nuclear privileges to a non-NPT party, threatening the stability of the arms race in the region. Because nations like India are perceived to gain strategic advantage, Pakistan and its neighbors feel more insecure and have spread their nuclear weapons, increased their defense investments and made it harder to establish trust between them.

Since the agreement was signed, the gap between regions has become more significant. Because India is respected globally as a responsible nuclear power, it receives a lot of investment, whereas Pakistan still has to overcome suspicion which stops it from taking advantage of economic support from other countries. As a result, South Asia's political economy is deeply divided, bigger differences have emerged among member states and regional integration efforts are held back. Because of the social effects of the deal, there are now clear divides around beliefs and national feelings, boosting exclusive over united approaches.

Peacebuilding initiatives by ordinary people and civil society groups are rarely given importance over big decisions made by governments and political elites. Greater use of proxies and informal methods in the military has caused threats to security, weakened how democracies are held accountable and put civilians at risk from the wider effects of great power battles. The result of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal is that the region now faces higher competition between big powers, greater division of interest groups and an imbalance in power, threatening peace, stability and development in South Asia.

The United States and India partnership has serious implications for Pakistan as well as the whole South Asia. It has the potential to threaten the regional security of South Asia as well as Pakistan which considers itself in a vulnerable position. This civil nuclear pact between India and the United States has the potential to disrupt the status-quo between India and Pakistan. For the most part, Pakistan faces various restrictions to transportation of military technology. Therefore, Pakistan needs to manufacture its domestic defense industries with sufficient investment in the sector of research and innovations. However, this demands a higher defense budget which will divert the attention from the social sector of Pakistan, causing instability in the region. In addition to this, there is a growing need for Pakistan to develop its International and regional alliances to get support on the security matters.

### **Recommendations**

To prevent worsening possibilities of the deal and help South Asia achieve real cooperation and sustainable peace, the researcher suggests the following multi-tiered steps:

#### **Revitalization of Regional Institutions and Multilateral Forums**

- Restore and boost SAARC and other regional forums that can facilitate discussions, help sort out conflicts and promote development.
- Make use of the UN or IAEA to organize a Nuclear Dialogue Forum for South Asia so that important issues about stability and arms control can be talked about consistently.

#### **Equal Access to Civilian Nuclear Technology**

- Pakistan should actively engage at international platforms to highlight the asymmetrical power balance in the region and should advocate at IAEA and NSG for equal treatment for civil nuclear projects.
- Policies made by the IAEA and NSG should be updated to ensure the distribution of nuclear energy for peaceful use is focused on fairness, rather than political interests.
- Encourage agreements among nations in the region, so Pakistan may join in regulated nuclear trade under control.

**Use of Confidence-Building Measures to Address Strategic Imbalance**

- India and Pakistan should negotiate and sign arms control treaties to put a brake on their arms competition.
- Introduce a proven halt on nuclear testing and production in the region to cut the risk of disputes and build more trust.

**Restrain Proxy Warfare and Militarization**

- Stimulate openness in spending on defense and descriptions of military doctrine through impartial inspection teams.
- Ensure countries in the region agree not to indirectly back groups outside the state by creating a code of conduct to be supervised by third parties.

**Inclusion of Human Security in Strategic Discourse**

- Instead of making security plans centered on states, make them focused on health, education and the ability to deal with climate change.
- Allow people outside government or political parties to have a say when regional policies are being developed.

**Promote Inclusive Economic Growth and Linkages**

- Support the growth of economic corridors that unite several countries and parties to cut down on polarization and raise cooperation.
- Support efforts that link smaller countries like Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh to the world market.

**Reconstruct International Diplomatic Relations**

- Donor countries and international financial institutions are advised to handle both India and Pakistan in a neutral way to prevent their strategic exclusion as well as large economic differences.
- Pakistan should consider developing stronger ties with South Asian and European powers like China, Russia and European Union to maintain balance of power in the region.
- The countries in the South Asian region must be provided with assistance to engage in peaceful diplomacy, rather than promotion of opposition, with a main goal of peaceful collaboration for improved governance and growth.

**Improve the Legal and Normative Rules**

- Reinforce the role of international law in nuclear governance to limit the accumulation of nuclear weapons and ensure that treaties are observed.
- Renovate and broaden non-proliferation rules to include everyone who possesses nuclear weapons and make them legally responsible.

### **Use of Track-II Diplomacy to promote strategic realignment**

- Introduce constant communications among people from different sectors, organize academic meetings and facilitate collaborative projects by journalists to help close the gap between different beliefs and promote understanding.
- Ask think tanks and strategic institutions in both India and Pakistan to jointly produce policy documents that suggest ways for the region to become more secure.

### **Establish a Regional Peace and Security Commission**

- Set up a special regionally appointed South Asian Peace Commission so that it can follow disputes, report findings, help resolve issues, keep watch on arms transfer and propose practical solutions.
- Choose people from civil society, academic organizations, business environments and minority groups to ensure inclusive decision-making.

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