



Integrated Deterrence and Strategic Stability in South Asia

Syeda Tahreem Bukhari,¹ Abdul Basit,² & Nazia Sheikh³

Abstract:

The 21st century witnesses a significant shift in global power dynamics, with the Asia-Pacific region emerging as a crucial arena for determining the trajectory of global power transitions. The United States finds itself grappling with the ascendancy of China, prompting the adoption of an integrated deterrence approach. This strategy revolves around bolstering key allies, leveraging their capabilities to counter competitors, notably China. In this context, the strategic alignment between the United States and India within the framework of integrated deterrence raises concerns among other regional states particularly, Pakistan and China. The collaborative efforts to strengthen India's role could potentially elevate India's posture, thereby unsettling the strategic equilibrium and leading to strategic miscalculations. This article critically examines how India is going to benefit under the integrated deterrence approach and the implications of the US integrated deterrence approach in the South Asian region through the theoretical lens of Strategic Stability. This study aims to delve into the intricate interplay between the US integrated deterrence strategy and its ramifications for the fragile security situation in South Asia. The qualitative method has been applied in the research relying mainly on the secondary data.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, South Asia, integrated deterrence, strategic stability, grand strategy

INTRODUCTION

Asia Pacific has been christened as a decider launch-pad for the global power transition in the 21st century. Henry Kissinger at the International Institute for Strategic Studies annual meeting in Geneva, said: "The center of gravity of world affairs has left the Atlantic and moved to the Pacific and Indian Oceans" (Kissinger, 2010). The boiling tension in the region is prophesying a greater power struggle. The US is confronting multiple challenges from both Russia and China. Russia's invasion of Ukraine gives a strong message to the US that it would not allow the expansion of NATO (Moskowitz, 2022). Furthermore, Russia is also a strategic threat to the US. To counter adversaries around the globe and strengthen its footprint in the Asia Pacific, the Biden administration devised a grand strategy for the region that revolves around integrated deterrence unfurled in the US

¹ Research Officer, Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Email: tahreembukhari1692@gmail.com.

² Associate Research Officer, Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Email: abdulbasit37748@gmail.com

³ Research Officer, Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Email: nsheikh536@gmail.com

National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy revealed in August 2022 (The White House, 2022). The transcript identified Iran as an irritant, Russia as an immediate threat, and China as a long-term threat to the US. It focused on strengthening deterrence against China, which created a security dilemma in the US. To maintain the existing status-quo the US will collaborate with a growing network of its allies and partners, this approach is termed integrated deterrence introduced by the US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin. Its purpose is to achieve deterrence by utilizing the capabilities of its allies and partners to deter competitors. Its purpose is to avoid military confrontation and incorporate both kinetic and non-kinetic measures to create deterrence (Lopez, 2021). As for the US, the rise of China and countering Russia is inflicting threats to its long-term strategic interests (Lynch III, 2022).

The strategic partner of the US in Asia-Pacific to counter the rise of China is India. Investing in India under integrated deterrence, an approach where its capabilities will be enhanced via different strategic engagements would be disturbing the strategic equation in South Asia. As it would be, it has implications for regional states as well, as Pakistan is a nuclear-armed rival where both shared a tortured history since their inception. Since the region faces greater hostility amid the rival factions, it becomes paramount that any strategic imbalance would foster greater conflict. Under an integrated deterrence policy, India will gain access to the greater military spending resulting in a conventional imbalance.

The US under Secretary of Defence Sasha Bakers, described integrated deterrence as an approach to integrate all elements of national power and allies to counter the war-fighting areas and other domains of conflict (Edwards, 2022). The US Secretary of Defence Dr. Colin H. Kahl emphasized the prime reason behind the concept of integrated deterrence, is to “converge allies that are the undeniable asymmetric trump card for the US over any other competitor or potential adversary” (Garamone, 2021). In integrated deterrence, alliances are an integral part as the US has to involve its allies to give a clear message to the adversaries that they are confronting more than just the US, they are compelling the coalition of nations against them (Garamone, 2021). To achieve integrated deterrence in counterbalancing the rise of China, the United States’ key ally is India (Mcmanus, 2022). The US is empowering India via different strategic engagements including Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Australia-UK-US Alliance (AUKUS), and different foundational agreements including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA), Basic Exchange Communication Agreement (BECA), and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). China and Pakistan being neighboring states of India having hostile relations would be threatened by the strategic advancements India will be achieving via the US. These strategic alignments pursued by the US against the adversaries are creating a security dilemma for the regional actors primarily Pakistan and China. The US will be threatening the deterrence equation existing between Pakistan and India and boosting India’s assumed sense of superiority which will lead to endangering the strategic stability of South Asia.

This paper aims to focus on these research questions: How India is going to benefit from its strategic partnership with the US? What would be the implications of the Integrated Deterrence Approach in the South Asian Region?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, meticulously scrutinizing books, journals, and articles on US policy towards Asia-Pacific, and the US-India relations and grasping far-reaching repercussions of the US Integrated Deterrence approach in the Asia-Pacific region and its implications for the South Asian region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Grand Strategy book written by Robert J. Art also highlights the significance of a grand strategy that defines a nation's leaders, what goals they should aim for, and how best they can use their country's military power to attain these goals (Art, 2013). In pursuing the very objective, the US designs a framework of efficacious foreign policy goals and the employment of profuse military power. The US enjoys a privileged geography, being secure behind two water masses hence no immediate threat at home. In the post-Cold War epoch, the US was primarily successful in pursuing its interests around the globe (Art, 2013). Several grand strategies have been employed by the US including offshore balancing, selective engagement, etc. However, the future seems quite odd, perhaps costing to a larger extent.

The theorists dealing with power transition earlier predicted that in the 21st century, the challenges to the US Hegemony will appear in Asia. Subsequently, the National Defense Strategy of the US in 2018 unfurled the acknowledgment of the reemergence of great power strategic competition. The very document underlined the Chinese rise as a peer-to-peer competitor and a military threat to the American hegemonic existence (Kim & Gates, 2015).

Historically, the discourse surrounding strategic stability predominantly concentrated on nuclear weapons, with conventional armaments seldom explicitly addressed in the context of conventional asymmetry and nuclearization in the Indian and Pakistani milieu (Jilani, 2019). However, contemporary deliberations on strategic stability are presently informed by a diverse array of factors. These include the modernization efforts within the Indian military, endeavors to establish regional hegemony, the employment of sub-conventional warfare tactics, the deliberate perpetuation of conventional asymmetry, instances of state-sponsored terrorism, and international aspirations aligned with the containment of China, particularly within the framework of the strategic partnership between the United States and India (Sargana, 2017).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Strategic Stability

The concept of "Strategic Stability" was outlined by the US and the USSR in 1990 as the lack of motivation for one nation to initiate a nuclear strike. It refers to the circumstances in which states are sure that their rivals would be incapable of weakening their capabilities of nuclear deterrent. Due to their geographic separation and established strategic languages, the Soviet Union and the US managed the crisis effectively and attained strategic stability. Since then, a lot has changed in the geopolitical, technological, and psychological environments that served to keep the nuclear-armed nations of the globe from going to war (Trenin, 2022). The concept and requirements for strategic stability, as well as the means of averting a nuclear conflict, have also undergone significant changes. This paper examines how the strategic stability of the South Asian region would be impacted by the US Integrated Deterrence approach. To comprehend the existing prospects, the

concept of "Strategic stability" provides the best lens to examine and provides in-depth of the strategic alignments in the region. The development of nuclear weapons has raised questions about strategic stability that was initially confined to nuclear deterrence in Cold War competitors and later the South Asian neighbors.

Factors Leading to Strategic Instability in South Asia

In contrast to Cold War adversaries, nuclear rivals in South Asia experienced crisis instability and strategic miscalculations vulnerability. That is why the US and USSR had to intervene to resolve most of their direct military stalemates. The scope of strategic stability has been broadened, notably in the perspective of South Asia, with the development of new alignments and the new weapons and their regimes including ballistic missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and anti-ballistic missiles achieved by the regional states. For the strategic stability in the year following World War II and the Cold War, nuclear weapons were alone responsible; conventional weapons were rarely explicitly discussed in conventional asymmetry and nuclearization in the context of India and Pakistan (Jilani, 2019). Additionally, the modern discourse in strategic stability has been influenced by the Indian military modernization, regional hegemony, the use of sub-conventional warfare, the intentional perpetuation of conventional asymmetry, state-sponsored terrorism, and the international ambitions linked to China's containment under the US-India strategic partnership (Sargana, 2017). This debate initiated concerning the US Integrated Deterrence approach that revolves around strengthening the key allies to counter its competitors and India is the major key ally in the South Asian region. In 2021, as per official data, India's weapons attained from the US increased from a small amount of USD 6.2 million to a huge USD 3.4 billion in the ending year of the Donald Trump administration ("India's weapons procurement," 2020). In contrast, their sale of weapons to other countries has been reduced. The strategic cooperation between the US and India is evident from a defense deal worth \$20 billion signed in 2020 (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2021). The defense equipment of 20 billion dollars was purchased by India from the US. This deal shows US commitment to Indian security and sovereignty.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TRANSITIONS IN US GRAND STRATEGY

Among the policy circles of the US, significant discussion over China policy erupted near the completion of the Obama government proved to be a sign of a real strategy shift within the Beltway (Friedberg 2015). The Trump administration publicly affirmed the resumption of great power politics and the end of the engagement policy in its National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, which were revealed in 2017 and 2018. These documents specifically referred to China as a "revisionist power" and the US "strategic rival" (Weaver, 2017). "The China Reckoning" written by Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner, serves as an example of how expectations over China's transition turned into disappointment and annoyance (Campbell & Ratner, 2018).

The administration of Trump began to cast the competition between U.S.-China in ideological terms as a clash of different political and economic ideologies in light of a qualitatively changed strategic partnership and the United States' disappointment with internal transformation in China. The strategic competition between the US and China extends predominantly in three dimensions that include the contestation for power and influence in geo-economic and geo-political terms, the contest for technological supremacy, and domination in military might. Organski, the founder of the Power transition theory prophesized a great war between China and the US almost 60 years ago,

despite the prediction of an unprecedented rise of China. In contemporary geopolitics, the United States is a great power concerning military might and geopolitical avenues; on the other hand, China is leading the status of economic power. It was prophesied that by 2050 China would lead the play in all dimensions of power a shocking reality for the US (Watts, 2006).

According to the Asia-Pacific Strategy Report of the Pentagon, “the primary issue for U.S. national security” is the “geopolitical struggle between free and repressive world order visions” (US Department of Defense, 2019). Vice President Mike Pence of the United States made a significant speech in which he comprehensively criticized China’s internal and exterior policies, drawing comparisons to the “Iron Curtain” address of Winston Churchill in 1946. China has not only “made a rapid U-turn towards abuse and control of its people,” but it has also interfered with American democracy, according to Pence (Perlez, 2018). However, the ideological aspect of the contention between the US and China was never expressed in such forceful terms as in recent remarks by the United States Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. He insisted Americans take into account the underlying distinctions of “two systems” and their influence on the national security of the United States in a series of speeches that used terminology evocative of the Cold War. He tried to draw a block between the Chinese Communist Party and the people of China by describing the struggles as being between “authoritarian rule and the Chinese Communist Party and freedom-loving people throughout the realm” (Perlez, 2018). In the Cold War era, the security dilemma between the US and the USSR was also ideologically driven (Jie, 2020).

American scholars have also openly stated that in great power competition ideology is the crucial element and that the United States should reflect upon taking advantage of China's domestic flaws to launch an ideological attack. Examples of these scholars include Johns Hopkins professor Hal Brands and Princeton professor Aaron Friedberg. Additionally, they claimed the ideological element would help the U.S. mobilize domestic resources and maintain a long-lasting rivalry with China (Brands, 2018). The US National Security Strategy 2022 under the Biden administration, highlights the integrated deterrence approach to deter its competitors. It is taken as a coercive Cold War strategy to deter China. The US integrated deterrence approach involved its strategic engagements with its key allies to empower them and make use of their capabilities to deter their competitors (The White House, 2022). These strategic alignments will give India an advantageous position in South Asia which will instill security dilemma in the neighboring countries, threatening the regional stability. While the US facing a relative decline, Beijing’s rise has been experienced by regularly progressing economic growth and programs of interdependence in the region and around the globe. World Bank states that since 2008 China has been the key global driver of economic growth. Its comprehensive power scope was visibly manifest in the Asia-Pacific and particularly in the Southeast Asia sub-region, where it does not have a regional major power. The road toward the 21st century indicates that the prime interest of American engagement in the Asia-Pacific is China.

The US- India Defense Foundational Pacts

The defense foundational pacts aim to enhance the capabilities of allies and strategic partners. The motive behind the integrated deterrence approach is to make use of the capabilities of its partners in countering the competitors. These agreements will strengthen the defense capabilities. In this regard, LEMAO, BECA, and COMCASA are signed between the US and India. LEMOA essentially exposes each other's most important assets, and COMCASA emphasizes how dependent the two

militaries are on exchanging encrypted technology. The newest of the four, BECA, allows nations to exchange highly sensitive information instantly (Javed, 2020). These agreements are designed to increase military collaboration between them. These strategic advancements are resulting in creating a strategic imbalance in South Asia.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

To bring defense commerce and technology exchange on par with that of its closest friends and partners, the United States classified India as a "Major Defense Partner" in 2016. The two states signed an agreement named Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement in 2016, which permits their forces to use one another's bases for supply replenishment and repair while also fostering closer cooperation (Munir, 2016). LEMOA enables the armed forces of the United States and India to refuel at one another bases and to access spare parts, supplies, and services at one another air bases, ports, and land installations with the possibility of reimbursement. This agreement will facilitate the US to use India's air base to counter the military might of China. It also allows both to use each other facilities to counter the common enemy of religious terrorism. So, India would again take leverage of it as it did before against Pakistan under the pretext of terrorism.

Both India and the US stand to gain significantly from LEMOA, particularly in terms of naval cooperation. Building mutual trust is necessary since the strategic pact allows the allies to disclose their strategic and military assets, like warships and other services, to one another. The negotiations for LEMOA, which took over a decade, helped to narrow the trust gap between the United States and India. It paved the way for more agreements.

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

In 2018, the United States and India inked an additional agreement known as the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), which enables military cooperation between the two nations and permits the export of advanced US technology to India. After the first 2+2 discussion, in which visiting Secretaries of State James N. Mattis and Michael R. Pompeo met with then-Defense Secretary Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, COMCASA was inked in September 2018 ("What is COMCASA?", 2018).

The agreement enables the United States to give India access to its encrypted communication systems and equipment it will facilitate both Indian and US military leaders and their ships and aircraft may interact over secure networks in both peacetime and armed conflict.

This agreement opened the door for the export of communication security equipment to India from the US to promote "interoperability" among the armed forces of both states and perhaps with those of other forces that employ US-origin technology for secure data communications (Panda, 2018).

Basic Exchange and Communication Agreement (BECA)

On October 26, near the US presidential elections, Michael R. Pompeo, United States Secretary of State, and Mark T. Esper, Secretary of Defense traveled to India. They met with the Indian Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh, and the state's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar. In the 2+2 Ministerial dialogue, the Basic Exchange and Communication Agreement (BECA) stood out among the bilateral agreements (Kumar, 2020).

BECA is one of the defense foundational pacts that will facilitate the allies to interchange sensitive satellite data, advanced military technologies, and other significant data. The accuracy of automated systems and artillery, such as armed drones and missiles, will be upgraded by allowing India immediate access to American geospatial intelligence. This agreement will facilitate India's access to geographical and aeronautical data, as well as leading-edge merchandise which will assist in navigation and targeting, by providing data on satellite photos and maps (Mukhtar, 2020).

Under this agreement, Air Force collaboration between the Air Forces of the US and India will be possible. This agreement will enhance the efficiency of fighter planes to effectively meet their targets. BECA will deliver a top-notch GPS to India's military systems that will be utilized to guide missiles with immediate information and accurately target their adversary. Geospatial information is crucial in responding to natural havoc, it also helps in navigating ships, flight aircraft, war fighting, and targeting the location (Roy, 2020).

BECA is considered to be a pivotal instrument for the awareness of the Indian military to plan conventional or nuclear strikes against adversaries. It will further boost the navigational aids and avionics horizons for the recipient. India has already incorporated various military products of the US for different purposes such as for military transport C-17 Globe master III, heavy lift helicopters like Boeing's Chinook, tank killers Boeing's Apache, for overland reconnaissance P-8I, and airlifting troops Lockheed Martin's C-130J. With the further strengthening of strategic alliance, BECA is anticipated to elevate the India-US strategic/defense partnership to exceptional new vistas. It is pertinent to highlight that, the United States typically signs such kind of defense agreements with its closest allies as it permits the interoperability of armed forces and the exchange of confidential sensitive information (Bano, 2020).

However, BECA was signed with the pretext of countering China, but it has geopolitical, military, and political implications for Pakistan particularly. This agreement will enhance India's capability to target Pakistan manifolds. It will enable India to observe Pakistan's nuclear installations closely. India will get access to Pakistan's sensitive maps putting Pakistan's security at stake. India and Pakistan are engaged in a decades-long rivalry with three all-out wars coupled with various battles and border skirmishes. The increasing US-India defense cooperation is creating a security dilemma for Pakistan.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) was created in 2004 between the US, India, Australia, and Japan for humanitarian assistance in the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami to carry out disaster relief operations was formalized in 2007 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe by stressing the need for cooperation among "India, Japan, and other like-minded countries in Asia-Pacific region." By talking about "the dynamic coupling" of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and "the confluence of the two seas" (Smith, 2022). Abe had made one of the initial allusions to the Indo-Pacific as a critical region. After that, the QUAD was dormant in keeping with the Nehruvian ideal of "non-alignment," India, led by the purportedly liberal Congress Party avoided any overt agreements with the US against China. Additionally, under the leadership of Mandarin-speaking Kevin Rudd, Australia was also hesitant to sever its strong strategic and economic links with Beijing.

The QUAD was endorsed in September by Stephen Biegun, US Deputy Secretary of State as a way to "make a critical mass about the common interests and values of those parties in a way that appeals to more states in the Indo-Pacific and also from the corner of the world". The Indo-Pacific "actually lacks strong multilateral structures" because what is required is "ultimately to align [our interests and moves] in a more organized way." Biegun continued, openly announcing the possibility of an Asian NATO under the auspices of the Quad, "Recollect even NATO initiated with pretty low aspirations, and several nations [at first] opt neutrality over participation in NATO" ("We have been cautious," 2020).

QUAD was then revived as a part of the US-led containment strategy in 2017. The QUAD member states consider the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as a single strategic space, where actions in one region would unavoidably have an impact on actions in another, giving rise to the concept of the Quad. This coalition and its underlying goals were driven by two factors. The first was that the US, Australia, Japan, and India had a stake in preserving the existing order's rules and customs, consolidating existing institutes, protecting freedom of trade and navigation, and advancing economic growth, security, and connectivity within those confines. The second was that all four Quad members thought that their countries and the region were in danger due to the rise of China and the span of its BRI (He, 2021). One of the reasons behind the QUAD revival was the perception of the Donald Trump and Biden administration about the Indo-Pacific as an essential theatre of conflict with China and the belief that India could assist them in countering China. They wanted to curtail China's influence in the Asia-Pacific Ocean and counterbalance China's rise. India, however, had recently engaged in several border clashes with China, which made it more eager to contribute to the Quad (Miller, 2021).

The militarization of the Indian Ocean is a result of these nations' participation in combined military exercises and naval drills. Australia saw the US-led QUAD Malabar exercises as a military alliance that was militarizing maritime trade and the Indian Ocean. Even now, China protested against these nations, alleging that they have an anti-China stance that they have never acknowledged. States in the South Asian region now face a security conundrum because of the QUAD Alliance. In addition, Beijing views the US, Australia, Japan, and India's Quadrilateral Security Dialogue as anti-China and an "Asian NATO." Additionally, Chinese officials stated: "China believes that rather than being harmful to regional peace and stability, military cooperation between nations should be peaceful" ("China says it firmly," 2021).

The QUAD has implications for Pakistan, as it is going to enhance India's naval capabilities leading towards enhancing further asymmetries with Pakistan. India being a stakeholder in QUAD may pursue an offensive posture against archrival Pakistan. India's ambition for the Blue Water navy enables them to put a naval blockade, thus they can choke Pakistan's economy. The role of India in destabilizing the strategic domain of South Asia has been critical. The US will be facilitated by India in the Indian Ocean maritime activities. However, the dominance exerted by a cult would surely erupt in a confrontational environment among the great powers. Any potent conflict in the Indian Ocean would surely halt trade activities and the consequences for the global economy would be dystopian (Khan, 2014). Moreover, this Sino-US competition in Asia-Pacific would also have repercussions for Pakistan due to its economic and defense relations with China. Such a bleak scenario lends credence to the fact that strategic stability is likely to disturb the region.

Australia-UK-US Alliance (AUKUS)

This AUKUS pact is the first of its kind, allowing a non-nuclear nation to have nuclear-powered submarines but no nuclear weapons. It lays out the framework for a new "maritime alliance" and elevates the Australia-UK-US alliance to the level of a more integrated military, scientific, and industrial community. China will become increasingly alienated as this alliance's internal relationships become tighter. The alliance has emerged as a frontrunner in the reorganization of international relations as a result of its stated goal of creating a "de-Sinicized" military-industrial chain. The alliance's "integrated deterrence" policy will alter the strategic deterrence structure in the Indo-Pacific region and alter key aspects of the US alliance system's deterrent strategy against China. The political will, strategic framework, deterrent concept, and military tactics exhibited by this momentous agreement need close attention from China (Shi, 2022).

India isn't a member of AUKUS, but it may use QUAD as leverage to press the United States for nuclear submarine technology. However, being excluded from AUKUS would provide India with more "strategic autonomy," allowing it to use military options at sea against China and Pakistan (Joshi, 2021). The AUKUS shows the US commitment to countering the rise of China, and India is going to benefit from this agreement of Australia, the UK, and the US.

Shifting Allegiances: Synergy of US-India Strategic Partnership

Indian political standing both international and domestic is likely to receive an unprecedented enhancement amid its comprehensive global partnership with the global power of the US. On the military front, India from the United States satellites would get access to the classified imageries that would facilitate India to gather its situational alertness and devise offensive military operations that might contain the likelihood of an aerial surgical strike inside Pakistan. Pakistan and India have been at odds since inception, with India continuously attempting to disturb the strategic balance. India under the BJP regime could also exploit its improved situational awareness to devise counterforce conventional or nuclear strikes against Pakistan's strategic assets. India recently tested a hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle that would be capable of transferring hypersonic cruise missiles with great speed and smashing the targets with more precision.

The strategic alignment between the US and India is leading towards instability in the region by enhancing the asymmetry between the two nuclear neighbors. Larry Pressler, in his book, 'Neighbours in Arms' highlights how India protested against the F-16 deal between the US and Pakistan in 2016 that they are going to be used against India by Pakistan (Pressler, 2017). Though Pakistan is not protesting against the strategic partnership between the US and India it is concerned about its security. Pakistan Ambassador, Khalil Hashmi raised concerns over the conventional and non-conventional weapons supply to India as it is going to erode the strategic stability in South Asia ("Pakistan concerned over," 2023). In pursuit of hegemonic designs, India is further strengthened by the agreements regarding excess to each other military bases, geospatial intelligence, and supply of weapons and technologies and to be part of different platforms. India nuclear deal 2008, NSG waiver given to India made it the only country outside NPT, which is obtaining nuclear fuel for its reactors (Niazi, 2022). This deal enhanced India's potential for nuclear arsenal buildup thus endangering the strategic stability of the region (Hibbs, 2017).

The US and India are collaborating on different sectors from defense, advanced technology, and space to next-generation telecommunications. In May 2022, the Biden administration and the

Indian Prime Minister announced their initiative on Critical and Emerging technology with a purpose to uplift and magnify strategic technology alliance and defense industrial collaboration between the two states incorporating their administrations, businesses, and academic institutions. The US and India embarked on a journey to enhance their partnership on technology, for this purpose they are initiating new bilateral agreements in different domains to make a robust innovation ecosystem they are collaborating in areas including quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, and advanced wireless. They are establishing a joint Indo-US Quantum coordination mechanism (The White House, 2023). India and the US are also collaborating on High-Performance Computing (HPC) by lowering trade barriers on HPC technology and source code for India. They also collaborate on space initiatives, cooperate on human space flight also strengthen commercial space partnerships. They are also jointly working on planetary defense. The US is also cooperating with India in development of 5G and 6G (The White House, 2023).

These engagements are going to strengthen India's position in South Asia and will help in the pursuit of regional hegemony. It will disturb India-China relations having implications for Pakistan as well. As India took Pakistan as its rival. These new advancements will create a threat perception in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The shift of great power competition in the 21st century towards the Asia-Pacific region brings the South Asia region into the limelight for major powers. South Asia region is already volatile in the context of strategic stability. Nuclear deterrence is not sufficient to enhance strategic stability in South Asia. There is an asymmetry in conventional and non-conventional weapons between Pakistan and India, the two nuclear neighbors and arch-rivals. The development of new weapons and their regimes has further destabilized the region. The integrated deterrence approach adopted by the US in countering the rise of China demands integrating key allies to counter the adversaries. This approach is going to bring the US and India closer. India will be empowered through different strategic alliances such as BECA, LEMOA, and COMCASA. Moreover, being a member of QUAD, India is going to strengthen its hegemonic designs in the region. The AUKUS alliance, being anti-China also strengthens India's position in South Asia. Furthermore, as a member of multiple alliance networks in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and the West, India is inspired to become a regional power. Their strategic engagements on different platforms and access to different technologies like geospatial intelligence, advanced weaponry, and new technologies lead the way towards strategic miscalculations further disturbing the asymmetry in conventional and non-conventional weapons between India and Pakistan. These arrangements are going to disturb the strategic stability of the South Asian region by disturbing the strategic equation between the two hostile neighbors. Grand Strategy employed by the US in the Asia Pacific to contain China may deteriorate the peace prospects of the South Asian region, as China and Pakistan may not tolerate either kind of offense inflicted by respective adversaries. If the strategic stability of the South Asian region gets tarnished, it will surely encompass consequences for people around the globe.

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