

Concept Of Deterrence And Its Relevance To South Asian Strategic Environment

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Abstract

Deterrence is considered to be dynamic and a powerful policy framework which remains sacrosanct. It fundamentally operates in the continuum of perception, in spite of being directly unified to the art of war which deals with reality. In South Asian context, overt nuclearization of India and Pakistan followed by intense phases of adversarial relationships witnessed that strategic stability persists and deterrence remained enduring; limiting all crises below a certain limit. However, flip side remains that deterrence could not prevent crises initiation. In this paper, Pakistan's deterrence regime in the overall ambit of its strategic culture has been debated. This paper also examines relevance and applicability of deterrence in Indo-Pak context focusing on its efficacy and challenges and proffer viable recommendations for ensuering sovereignty through deterrence and flexible strategic posturing options.

Keywords: Nuclearization, Cross-Domain Deterrence, Nuclear, Strategic, Hybrid, India and Pakistan.

تلخیص

مزاحمت ایک متحرک اور قومی پالیسی فریم ورک ہے جو مستحکم رہتا ہے۔ یہ بنیادی طور پر تصورات کا تسلسل ہے، اس کے باوجود کہ یہ جنگ کا حصہ ہوتا ہے جو حقیقت سے نمٹتا ہے۔ جنوبی ایشیائی تناظر میں بھارت اور پاکستان کے بیچ شدید دشمنی کے مراحل کے ساتھ دیکھا گیا ہے کہ حکمت عملی کے استحکام کے ساتھ مزاحمت بھی برقرار ہے۔ جس کے تحت تمام بحرانوں کو مخصوص حد تک محدود کر دیا ہے۔ تاہم دوسری طرف مزاحمت کی حکمت عملی سے بحران کے آغاز کو نہیں روکا جاسکتا۔ اس مقالے میں پاکستان کے مزاحمت کے تمام دور میں اس کی حکمت عملی پر بحث کی گئی ہے۔ اس مقالے میں انڈوپاک کے تناظر میں اس کے اطلاق اور مطابقت کا معائنہ کیا گیا

ہے، ساتھ ہی اس کے چیلنجز اور افادیت پر بھی روشنی ڈالی گئی ہے اور منافع بخش تجاویز پیش کی گئی ہیں جس سے مزاحمت اور لچکدار حکمتِ عملی کے ذریعے خودمختاری کو یقینی بنایا جائے۔

کلیدی الفاظ: جوہرکاری، کراس ڈومین مزاحمت، نیوکلئیر، حکمتِ عملی، ہائبرڈ، انڈیا اور پاکستان

Introduction

The threat to use force with a view to deter the potential adversary for attainment of political objectives has been a persistent phenomenon since the history of mankind. However, development of nuclear weapons has fundamentally changed the concept due to their capability to decimate the entire human civilization (Brodie, 1978). Deterrence, forming the core of the national security strategy, is a complex marvel but put in simple terms, it means the anticipated punitive cost of aggression or an extremely undesirable action which seemingly could incite an adversary to retaliate in a manner thus outweighing any presumed benefits (Mueller, 2018). It is directly proportional to the punitive cost - higher the cost, the more stable and robust deterrence would be. In case the perceived cost of retaliation becomes acceptable, deterrence equation runs the risk of instability, leading to a failure.

In the Indo-Pak context, deterrence dynamics are exceptionally complex and the “Stability-Instability Paradox” as originally contemplated by Glenn Snyder (Jervis, 1979), is fully validated in Indo-Pak milieu. The threat mosaic for Pakistan got quite complex, wherein prevailing geo-political contestation between global and regional powers, conflicts with immediate neighbours and exploitable internal vulnerabilities are few highlights. While post nuclearization, strategic stability did exist and military showdown has been prevented effectively; it could not prevent crisis emergence at lower end wherein conflict domain rested into grey hybrid construct (Brown, 2018). Recently ???(it is not recent. The reference is given of 2008) Indian quest for BMD (Ballistic Missile Defence), Indo-US nuclear deal, availability of cutting edge technologies, developments in space and missile technology and pervasive influence of NSAs (Non State Actors) have injected yet another layer of complexity to the deterrence paradigm (Ganguly, 2008). Hybrid threat environment coupled with Indian desire to create space for war through evasive military strategies have made strategic stability tenuous. Hence, there is a need to critically examine applicability of deterrence in Indo-Pak context and challenges posed to it. This paper therefore seeks to assess the efficacy of deterrence in South Asian paradigm and proffer a comprehensive deterrence framework emanating strategic posturing options for Pakistan.

Deterrence and Pakistan’s Strategic Culture

Politics of deterrence has always been complex and enigmatic. Twenty two years of nuclear South Asia has been all about a “Paradoxical Deterrence Seesaw” that was intense, yet not unstable enough to cause its failure (Khan, 2013). Post-Pulwama crisis has impelled the long-standing debate between deterrence optimists and pessimists about the role of deterrence in shaping the strategic dynamics of Indo-Pakistan nuclear dyad (Khan, 2013). Deterrence is engrained in Pakistan’s strategic culture. It has always refused to acquiesce to Indian military might and remains determined to find ways to equalize. Pakistan is neither willing to sacrifice its sovereignty, nor ready to accept the terms of the status quo as it considers its nuclear weapons critical to assurance for national survival (Khan, 2008). Pakistan’s fundamental security policy is to deter India from aggression and to raise the cost, should India contemplate any misadventure (Kapur, 2005). The integration of nuclear and conventional forces necessary to create a credible deterrent, and the use of nuclear weapons as a war-fighting tool not contemplated in Pakistan's strategic thinking is a pure misperception in Indian thinking, hence a misplaced notion bearing attendant risks. Pakistan Strategic community is clear that there exists no space of war between Pakistan and India; Pakistan desires to deter war but will not hesitate to defend itself and use nuclear weapons (Tkacik, 2010). Moreover, the incident-prone relations juxtaposed by the environment of mistrust are detrimental to stability and may result in strategic miscalculation. Its recent manifestation was post 26 February 2019 events, where contrary to the thinking on Indian side that they could manage the escalation ladder on a more predictable and gradual slope, the slope was neither predictable nor gradual, it was almost vertical (Waqar, 2020). Major players of the global chess board also eyed the same with great concern.

Pakistan’s Deterrence Regime. Comprehensive national security amid evolving international and domestic environment entails countering threats in all domains, warranting a more accelerated shift from merely a nuclear and conventional dominant deterrence to the comprehensive approach towards deterrence based on all Elements of National Power (Talbot, 2020). It is in this backdrop and contemporary concepts of deterrence that Pakistan’s deterrence regime can be classified in four leading domains/ strands as under:-

- **Nuclear Deterrence.** It forms the core of deterrence. With the possession of full spectrum of nuclear weapons, having a policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and retaining the option for First Use.
- **Conventional Deterrence.** A ready and arrayed conventional force, capable of responding to any misadventure over land, air or sea.
- **Deterrence against Sub-conventional Warfare.** A challenge to conventional deterrence, the successful conduct of sub-conventional operations over last almost two decades, Pakistan has developed

proficiency in handling and displayed its capability and resolve to effectively counter the sub-conventional threats.

- **Deterrence against Hybrid Conflicts.** Prime means of such deterrence reside in Information Operations, Cyber Security and Exterior Manoeuvre/ Diplomacy, complimented by secondary means of technological prowess, pacts and law fare etc.

Strategic Stability in Indo-Pak Context

In Indo-Pak context, prima facie, though present deterrence paradigm is working, yet, conflict per se is not being deterred. The renewed global power contestation in our backyard has pitched Pakistan against national security establishments of a number of regional and extra regional countries (Talbot, 2020). Pakistan's near defiance to the global superpower in its pursuits, and consequent re-alignment with emerging Sino-Russian power centre makes use of indirect strategy, a desire for some major international players to keep this contestation alive in South Asia (Siddiqui, 2012). India has invested billions of dollars in Afghanistan to create disproportionate space and launch her indirect manoeuvre against Pakistan on the premise of the so called Doval doctrine. Indian anti- Pakistan policy makers feel that their manoeuvre has not only been checked but will be rolled back completely, some like General Bakshi project that loss of strategic space in Afghanistan will start affecting Occupied Kashmir and Kashmir Freedom Movement will become more emboldened (Rasool, 2019). Over the years, India has genuinely started believing that it is the 'Elevated One, the Designated One' and perhaps the 'Chosen One'. The future, Indians say with earnest glee, is 'Theirs'.

In addition to the troubled bilateral relations, external influence of the US is also undermining the prospects of strategic stability in the sub-continent due to their bolstered cooperation with India. Pakistan, on the other hand evolved out from its shelve of being tagged a security driven and a state in denial (Rana, 2018). Exploiting available leverages reducing strategic squeeze through visible measures, it has started projecting a more confident and proactive state, displaying defined stance in response to Indian intransigence hence ever increasing resolve in its strategic culture of defiance. India's recent behaviour suggests that it is bent on using its newfound power to craft an Indian-centric security system in the South Asia. New Delhi has signalled that it is progressively working toward developing and refining the means to devalue Pakistan's nuclear deterrent posture (Tasleem, 2016). India's Pro-Active Strategy is therefore, aimed at inflicting the punishment on Pakistan in a short time. Indians base their argument of space for limited war, on the assumption that asymmetry between both countries has reached to a point whereby India can shape environment (through application of other EoNP), to dilute diplomatic, economic,

political, legal and conventional strands of deterrence regime. They believe that the limited conflict will not escalate to a general war and further to a nuclear exchange, despite the prevailing atmosphere of mistrust and convictions regarding the irrationality of the “other.”

Pakistan has responded effectively through developing effective cross-domain deterrence capabilities to deny any space for war to India (Kumar, 2020). The case in point is Pulwama crisis where India’s politically driven and concocted narrative was being supported vehemently by obsequious local media, to create domestic support for so called punitive surgical strikes. The aim was to break the myth of India not having offensive options to deal with so called terrorist threats and embarrass Pakistani military to create an environment of Indian hegemony in the region. The strikes were also considered as a distinct departure from the strategic and tactical approaches it had adopted in the past and possess the potential of being set as the "New Normal", wherein new terms are being set aiming to keep the near conventional escalation control. It can be deduced that post-Balakot crisis, the stability of deterrence has affected and the surgical strikes have introduced a new rung to the Pak-India dyad. Moreover, it seems that both sides have had their “Cuban Missile Crisis Moment” and realise how a couple of wrong turns could trigger uncontrollable consequences (Lewis, 2019).

Major Challenges to Strategic Stability in South Asia

With the passage of time, the dynamics of strategic stability, instead of becoming strong and mature, have turned out to be more complex and fragile. It has been facing numerous internal and external challenges, which are not only confined to traditional aspect of maintaining a strategic and conventional forces balance, but also revolve around *history, social, political, economic, legal and cultural aspects*. Some of the important challenges are briefly listed below:-

- **Nuclear.** India aspires to undermine Pakistan’s nuclear capability at the minimum and de-nuclearization at the maximum end of its wish list spectrum (Ahmed, 2020). Their leadership is fully aware of the dividends of overt nuclearization of the sub-continent and render it as major hindrance in fulfilling their nefarious designs; hence, continue renewed ventures aimed at restraining the said capability. Some of the latest developments in this regard, considered as stress points, are as follows:-
 - Growing nuclear arms race with technological advancements in weapon systems and the delivery means.
 - Growing Indo-US strategic partnership.
 - Relentless pursuit of assured second strike capability.
 - Absence of strategic restraint regime.
 - Doctrinal developments and revisiting stated NFU stance.

- Indian Ballistic Missile Defence shield and acquisition of S-400.
- Hypersonic cruise missile.
- **Conventional.** The renewed strategic culture and prevalent military thought is precipitating new normal wherein India continues to define new terms of references to undermine Pakistan's armed forces (Paul, 2019). It is increasingly focussed on capability enhancement for strategic outreach, to fulfil the tasks of Net Security Provider, let alone discouraging Pakistan. The desired end state seeks to discredit Pakistan's Military, assert as a dominant regional power with enhanced global relevance, seeking pliancy from neighbours, particularly Pakistan, with a special emphasis to regress on core issues.
- **Hybrid.** Spirit of Age in Indo-Pak conflict has spread from *conventional (3rd generation warfare) to unconventional (5th generation warfare)*, with emphasis on Hybridity, aimed at dominating lower rungs of escalation (Shah, 2019). Conflict has become more *indirect*, covering a *broad spectrum*, ranging from political, diplomatic, psychological, social and economic arenas to 'all-out conventional war' in which victory is not defined on the battle-field alone. The term 'War' has become amorphous and applies to various combinations of employing conventional and unconventional capabilities, both kinetic and non-kinetic; under the broad banner of conflict.

Efficacy of Deterrence in South Asian Context

Global aversion to nuclear conflict in South Asia has reinforced the concept of nuclear deterrence. However, chances of a limited war by India with tacit approval of other major actors as a result of strategic miscalculation continue to stress deterrence (Noor, 2020). Some of the conclusions of research regarding efficacy of deterrence in the South Asia are appended below:-

- The concept of deterrence in the contemporary environment of South Asia is different from that of the Cold War due to peculiar strategic cultures, geographical contiguity and prevalence of unsettled disputes.
- Hegemonic Indian designs, enhanced military/ defence acquisitions turning into arms race (premised on fabricated notion of a two front war scenario), acquisition deal of S-400 with Russia and assured second strike capability are furthering growing conventional differential, hence negatively impact the existing deterrence regime.
- India believes that there is a space for limited war and is therefore evolving concepts and developing means to neutralise nuclear deterrence of Pakistan through application of conventional capabilities for attainment of politico-military objectives.
- Pakistan's "Full Spectrum Capability" has reinforced the credibility of deterrence, further curtailing the space for war, thereby rendering the

application of military means by India highly risk prone and uncertain, thus foreclosing the option of a limited war / quick victory. However, focus of the conflict has already transcended into other domains, warranting framework of rearticulating strategic posturing through “Comprehensive Deterrence”.

- Pakistan’s befitting response after “Balakot Strike” has fortified the notions of “Deterrence through Punishment” and “Deterrence by Denial”. Moreover, unfolding of the events in the aftermath bear testimony to the fact that surgical strikes / limited war may spiral into a bigger conflict due to Pakistan’s demonstrated resolve of responding in self-defence (Tarapore, 2019).
- Two peculiar forms of deterrence in the conventional domain include “Deterrence through Maintenance of a Capability” and “Deterrence through Manifestation of a Capability” (Payne, 2011). The latter, being more potent gained credence during ongoing standoff between Pakistan and India.
- In the non-kinetic domain of Hybrid Warfare, the important strands of Clauswitzian Trinity i.e. the strand between People and the Government is being exploited to create mistrust leading to social unrest, manipulating existing fault lines (Dimitriu, 2018). Whereas, linkage between People and the Armed Forces is being targeted to weaken the national cohesion. ‘People’ figure out as the prime targets; hence the significance of Human Security.

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|---------------|---|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. People | ↔ | Government | - Mistrust leading to social unrest |
| 2. People | ↔ | Military | - Weaken national cohesion. |
| 3. Government | ↔ | Military | - Institutional disharmony & divide. |

Challenges to the Deterrence Regime

Pakistan since inception has focused on security enhancement, whereas, India can be termed as a power maximizer. Indian economic growth during the last two decades has resulted into tremendous increase in the defense budget (Krepon & Thompson, 2013). Resultantly, acquisition of hi-tech equipment has the potential to further stress the deterrence regime and the regional stability. Moreover, in the Indo-Pak context, peculiar value systems and emotive tendencies may lead to irrationality with the potential to dilute deterrence. Some of the major challenges to the deterrence regime of South Asia include following:-

- In the overall geo-strategic construct, India has emerged as a countervailing power on the face of rapidly growing China, hence accruing defence and security related dividends from the west in general and US in particular with negative implications on security calculus of South Asia.

- Peculiar strategic culture, value systems and anti-Pakistan sentiments may induce self-interest and politically weak decision makers in India to opt for a strategic miscalculation with regards to Pakistan's nuclear deterrence and its resolve to, "First Use Option", thereby overlooking the firmly in place deterrence regime.
- Indian strategic partnership with US, Indo-US nuclear deal with de jure nuclear status to gain access to fissile material, grant of "Net Security Provider" status in IOR to counter balance China are likely to disturb already asymmetric power equation in the region, stressing the deterrence regime.
- In the regional context, it is more expensive to ensure "Mutual Deterrence" due to a need for continuous modernization, development and production of new weapons to narrow the existing gaps in the capabilities; hence a challenge to the deterrence.
- Despite full spectrum deterrence, some strategic thinkers in India still believe in the existence of space for war below the nuclear overhang. In this regard, Indian notions of "Cold Start Doctrine" and "New Normal" figure out as the major threats to the regional peace and the deterrence paradigm.

To establish herself as an uncontested regional power with global standing, India continue to pursue strategy of compellence against its arch enemies inducing negative interdependence of perceptions and behaviour, creating web of threat and escalating manoeuvres with inherent risk of inadvertent escalation. Coherence of ambitions, realities and resources despite Pakistan's vulnerabilities remain elusive, hence an assured favourable outcome is not insight in case of war. It is therefore looking at persistent effort to set new terms of reference at lower rungs of escalation enforcing "Resist & Respond", albeit with risk of reputational hurt (Dahiya & Ashok, 2012). However, in obtaining environment, pursuance of Compellence and perceived measure of grand standing may set a commitment trap on India duly exacerbated by her charged domestic sentiment - towards a strategic miscalculation. India's domestic realities can best be summed up Ideologically as a display of saffronized consolidation against constitutional secularism, Politically as domination of majoritarian views with institutions under politicization siege, Diplomatically as favourably disposed, although indicted with Human Rights Violations, Economically as registering slow growth now veiled in Pandemic effect beside greater probability of fast recovery due to possible windfall dividends and Militarily as striving for structured and arrayed forces to project agile and technology driven threat posture. Keeping in view the existing deterrence regime and ambitions of both the belligerents, the strategic environment of Sub-continent can best be summed up as semi permissive when comparison is made between the net national capabilities allowing cautious optimism in favour

of Indian compellence against perceived Pakistan's deterrence, however, risks in multiple domains needs to be mitigated (Krepon et al., 2015).

Key Takeaways

India moving away from policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence, signalling moving away from NFU policy and concept of massive retaliation (Salman, 2020) could trigger a rapid escalation with devastating consequences. Preponderance in Non-Contact Warfare capabilities, reassured beliefs on space for war afford Indian military planners degree of psychological liberty of action wherein, the interplay of intent and capabilities carries serious implications for deterrence stability resulting into inadvertent escalation between two nuclear armed states. Post Pulwama events reflect Indian inclination of introducing kinetic application as an intrinsic phenomenon (Mirza, 2020), wherein a possibility existed of use of non-nuclear missile capability especially Brahmos missile in standalone mode (may be acting as a prelude to prosecution of all out conflict). The danger of inadvertent escalation as a result of miscalculation, possibility of invoking disproportionate response denied such an eventuality. Some of the important takeaways in this scenario are:-

- Despite, nuclear deterrence in the Indo-Pak milieu, the strategic stability remains fragile, posing a challenge to the regional stability.
- A history of turbulent relations, growing number of border skirmishes; the perennial Kashmir dispute; active involvement in intra-state conflicts; contesting regional and global outlook and above all, power asymmetry are the major causes of instability in South Asia.
- In a mix of realism and strategic culture, Pakistan will not seek parity with India but will do its utmost to balance and retain initiative; it will seek external alliances with outside powers, but will not sacrifice its regional objectives.
- Possession of nuclear capability by both India and Pakistan has resulted into “Stability-Instability Paradox”, being manifested in the form of Indian sponsored Hybrid Conflict and proxies in erstwhile FATA and Balochistan (Iqbal, 2018). Emerging paradigm of “Non-Contact Warfare” also seems applicable with no / limited application of the kinetic prong.
- Cross-domain deterrence implies a viable, credible and technologically ascendant non-conventional capability augmented with presence of a conventional military structure which is in state of a strategic parity with adversary.
- Pakistan’s nuclear program has essentially been ‘dedicated’, much more ‘reactive’ and state security remains its principal *raison d’être*. Pakistan has also sought nuclear weapons principally to meet threats from India’s conventional superiority.

- Nuclear deterrence theory is not fully applicable in peculiar Indo-Pakistan strategic environment. The outcome of this disparity (to-date) is that the balance of terror alone is not enough to guarantee the functioning of the deterrence theory and there is always a need for benign external intervention for deterrence operability between India and Pakistan.
- Additionally, the deterrence theory also required to be redefined with evolving psychological reset in Indian domestic environment (Hindutva). At our end, a strong "Whole of Nation" resolve has to be portrayed accordingly.
- Global aversion to conventional wars; specially between nuclear states, growing cost of war and strategic parity in South Asian context has given way to persistent application of non-kinetic means and sub-conventional warfare to achieve politico-military objectives by India, hence necessitating Pakistan to redefine deterrence in entire spectrum of conflict - Comprehensive deterrence.
- Activities of violent state and non-state actors have the potential to create a crises situation and upset the strategic stability. This adds to another layer of complexity to Pakistan-India nuclear deterrence.
- Indo-Pak strategic stability is getting complex; with Indian strategic rethinking (changing policies), massive developments and aligned concepts of Non-contact warfare, resurging beliefs in space for war have reinforced the entanglement shaping up in South Asia where any chances of miscalculations remains high.

Way Forward

Pakistan is faced with multi-dimensional threats in various domains. However, with its geostrategic location, credible nuclear capability, improving internal security situation, youth potential, strong agricultural base, abundant natural wealth, strong military component, consolidating democracy and above all a resilient, enterprising and creative society, has the potential to deter and defeat the inimical playbook. Compelling need is to adopt a posture; relevant in purpose, capability and responsiveness to deliver performance at the speed of relevance and optimum effects. For that to happen, integration of planning, efforts and leadership; all are needed to transform the inert resources into a finely tuned muscle that makes wide range of motion and action possible with potential to act, even when not fully flexed. To dominate complete threat continuum, response framework and constituents for comprehensive deterrence are suggested in the ensuing paragraphs.

- **Strategic Framework - Comprehensive Deterrence.** Evolving strategic environment of South Asia dictates that instead of traditional deterrence policy, there is a requirement to devise a complete framework to raise the

cost vis-à-vis benefits for inimical forces. Suggested framework is designed to convince aggressors that their gambit would fail with a promise of an implicit threat of escalation. Cardinals of these postures include:-

- **Preventive Influence.** Against neighbours and regional actors; by retaining competitive edge and positive leverages. Concurrently marginalize dissident factions within to ensure ideational defence of the country and its political philosophy. Aim is to avoid competitors becoming grand ideological enemies.
- **Control & Defence.** It is aimed at addressing own fault lines and adopting pro-active measures and mechanisms to forestall the kinetic threats in 4th and 5th Generation Warfare domains.
- **Deterrence.** Effective deterrence by maintaining robust capabilities to execute ‘Denial’ and ‘Punishment’ strategies. Former be aimed at denying opportunities to the adversary and reduction of adversary’s abilities to exploit own vulnerabilities, whereas, latter to cause acceptance of greater risk to adversary and denying her a practical vision of the success.
- **Nuclear Domain.** Existing policy of “Full Spectrum Deterrence” under the umbrella of “Credible Minimum Deterrence”, the option of “First Use” and ambivalence nuclear threshold need to be maintained. To ensure Credible Minimum Deterrence in the face of rapid developments by our adversary, there is a need for continuous improvement in warheads, cruise missiles, delivery means, command and control systems, ISR means and the defence mechanisms. Some additional aspects like maintaining prudent strategic communication, revitalization and reorientation of SUPARCO and acquisition and research on compatible technologies must be pursued.
- **Conventional Military Deterrence.** Credibility is said to be the function of Capability and Resolve so as to fulfil need of dominating lower rungs of escalation. Therefore, in view of evolving threat milieu, the need of gradual enhancement/ improvement in capabilities is a must avoiding getting into an arms race. We should endeavour to ensure that our force development benchmarking rests upon factor of maintaining Credibility at every stage.
- **Organisational and Doctrinal Updation.** Structural review must be undertaken for organizational and doctrinal changes to combat all forms of perceived threats and making up for critical imbalances in the three services. Conventional forces must be maintained strong enough, so that the nuclear threshold is not lowered. Modernization of all conventional forces should be planned through acquisition of 5th generation aerial and compatible naval platforms. Capacity building must be planned in line with force development goals with focus on quality and indigenization including public-private partnership.
- **Deterrence in Hybrid Domain.** Cohesive role of complete strategic community is quintessential for effectiveness of comprehensive deterrence.

All-inclusive social contract amongst polity, bureaucracy, military, academia, media, businessmen and lawyers to be instituted progressively for implicit recognition of ideational entrenchment needed on political philosophy and progression of the nation. The strategic community needs to continuously evaluate prevailing environment, strategic trends and consequent threats with a view to suggesting in-domain and cross-domain coordinated response options to all elements of national power. Following can also be considered:-

- Institutionalize community outreach programs (education; healthcare).
- Focused outreach with disenchanted, segments of academia & media.
- People and small business friendly economic policies to dispel despondency.
- Invest in educated, media savvy segments of domestic population.
- Improve state institutions' outreach with civil society organizations, opinion makers & academia.
- Specialized platforms must be established to develop narratives by NACTA.
- Establishing Pakistan Centres in leading think tanks in short to midterm.
- **Global Contestation – Hedging.** To maintain Positive Relevance, we need to exploit available leverages including geo-strategic location with focus on economic revival, while promoting friendly, peaceful and reciprocal relations within the region and beyond. Exploit transient opportunities to own advantage within the dynamics of global contestation. Remain engaged at the same time determined highlighting in concrete terms to US for own proactive role for peace in Afghanistan. Need to gradually build lobbies in key western countries by engaging influential overseas Pakistanis and Think Tanks/ Media houses.
- **Economic Security.** Exploiting enormous internal potential, leverages afforded by the geo-strategic location and the youth bulge, undertake economic reforms with focus on export led inclusive growth aimed at socio-economic uplift; transformation of human resource into human capital. Stabilize by adhering to strict fiscal discipline and prudent monetary policy in the short term and optimize in medium to long term through structural reforms and growth oriented strategy focusing on capital formation, broadening tax base and sustained growth; targeting GDP growth rate of 7 %. Efforts be directed towards renegotiating IPPs on an emergent basis.
- **Human Security.** Should be aimed at a vibrant, progressive and productive nation through focused human development, forming a national asset, strengthening national security, duly integrated in the global web. The implementation strategy to be driven by an adoption framework constituting data collection, finances, infrastructure, social mobilization and monitoring and evaluation.

- **Internal Security.** Needs to be viewed as an expanded notion of security that defines peace not simply as the absence of violence, but the presence of conditions necessary for enhancing social cohesion and resilience, aimed at reshaping both the State and Society to achieve enduring peace (Nabeel, 2018). Stabilize Western Zone aimed at improved governance, strengthening social contract and denying social space to dissidents and miscreants through synchronized political and military prongs enabled by broad based development, generation of economic activities, entrenchment of socio-economic reforms, while concurrently effectuating layered intelligence network and effective border control.
- **Governance.** Good governance is pre-requisite to ensure that capabilities held by the state are internally consistent, mutually reinforcing, quick footed and responsive with functional objectivity in an organised structure that reinforces excellence. Need to reform governance system aimed at strengthening social contract through provisions of security, justice, education, health and equal opportunities to all citizens, while simultaneously mitigating ill-effects of 18th Amendment reviving competitive spirit among federating units. As a must, the Judicial, Police and Civil Service reforms, e-governance and functioning Local Governments can instill responsiveness.
- **Information and Cyber Security.** Information policy be aimed at projecting Pakistan as a sovereign, democratic and progressive state, which is at peace with itself and with others; constructing an image, at home and abroad, which instils spirit of hope, inspiration and good-will. It should foster management of information environment, while creating its constructive use through effective mediums, empowered organizations, effective legislative governing apparatus and coordinated mechanism. Alongside information domain, cyber is a virtual but real threat and warrants a comprehensive Cyber Security Regime at national level duly supported with requisite legislations.

It can be summed up that evolving geo-strategic transformation and its spin offs in overall environment of South Asia has seriously impacted the security dynamics of Pakistan, posing new challenges to the deterrence regime. The comprehensive deterrence need to be woven around well-grounded ideology, resolute national resilience and unflinching politico-military and societal resolve and economic consolidation to safeguard national interests with credible military and strategic capability, forming the inner core. By resurrecting deterrence postures in its comprehensive conception, we can surely exhaust the inimical playbook by parrying out prevalent strategic squeeze, defying provocative postures and consolidating against domestic frailties to propel Pakistan's destined growth and prosperity.

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