

About the Issue

This special issue of the *National Security* journal contains nine important contributions including four essays, three articles and two book reviews, dedicated to different dimensions of Military Preparedness for Future Wars.

Gen Anil Chauhan (Retd.) examines India’s Pakistan-China two-front challenge, arguing that a conventional simultaneous war remains unlikely. However, growing China-Pakistan collusion through intelligence, military support and diplomacy poses a significant threat, potentially compounded by Pakistan’s defence pact with Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Lt Gen Rakesh Sharma (Retd.) draws lessons from recent conflicts, highlighting gaps between political and military objectives, battlefield transparency, cyber warfare, drones and air defence, and stressing India’s need for resilience and modern deterrence.

VAdm Shekhar Sinha (Retd.) examines the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) amidst US-China rivalry, contested chokepoints and shifting alliances. He argues that India faces a Chinese-dominated single-front threat across land and sea, requiring urgent expansion of submarine programmes, aircraft carriers, drones and missile defence. VAdm Satish Soni (Retd.) examines Pakistan’s naval modernisation under Vision 2030, highlighting submarines, frigates, drones and precision-strike systems developed with China and Turkey. He notes Pakistan’s sea-based nuclear deterrent and growing strategic convergence, which could complicate Indian naval operations and increase miscalculation risks.

Air Mshl Rajesh Kumar (Retd.) examines the growing China-Pakistan strategic partnership and its implications for India. The article highlights their expanding defence cooperation and the emerging two-front challenge for India. Dr. Manpreet Sethi examines the decline of bilateral nuclear arms control amid multipolar competition and technological challenges. She advocates flexible “nuclear risk control” measures for India and cautious confidence-building with China and Pakistan.

In his article, Dr. Vishwajeet Singh Akhawat explores the changing US approach towards Iran and the consequences of the war. He argues that the conflict has consolidated Iran’s internal security apparatus and enhanced its regional influence. Dr. Arvind Gupta reviews *Vivek Chadha’s Mahabharata’s Strategic Insights: Navigating the Dharmic Compass*, highlighting its challenge to the view that India lacks strategic thought. He explains how Dharma offers a flexible framework for statecraft, warfare and strategic decision-making. The review calls for wider study of Indian strategic traditions in universities and greater scholarly engagement with indigenous thought.

Dr. Annpurna Nautiyal reviews Amb. Satish Chandra’s *India-Pakistan Relations: A Saga of Unending Disputes*, tracing the historical disputes shaping bilateral relations since Partition. The review highlights the book’s detailed coverage of Kashmir, wars, terrorism and other enduring contentious issues.



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Viraj Tower 2, 4259/3, Ansari road,
Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002
Tel.: +91-11-45355555- Fax: +91-11-23275542
Email: contact@printspublications.com
Website: www.printspublications.com

NATIONAL SECURITY • Volume 9 Issue 4 • October-December 2026

ISSN 2581-9658 (o)

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Volume 9 Issue 4 October-December 2026

Military Preparedness for Future Wars

Essays

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Lessons from Contemporary Wars

Rakesh Sharma

Major Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean

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Pakistan’s Naval Capability: Implications for the IOR

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Breakdown of the Nuclear Arms Control Regime

Manpreet Sethi

The US-Iran War and the Reshaping of West Asia

Vishwajeet Singh Akhawat

Book Reviews



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International
Foundation**

National Security

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Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, Professor, Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (Retd.), and MK Gandhi Chair in Peace and Conflict Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Former Senior Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi
Email: sujitdutta@vifindia.org, nationalsecurity@vifindia.org

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SARADA SUBHASH

Research Associate
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Email: saradasubhash@vifindia.org

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE	
National (INR) 2500.00	International (US\$) 250.00

Online version free with print subscription

All remittances must be paid in favour of Prints Publications Pvt. Ltd. payable at New Delhi.

ELECTRONIC VERSION : This Journal can be accessed at www.printspublications.com

PERIODICITY : This Journal is published Quarterly in March, June, September and December

All business correspondence should be addressed to :



Prints Publications Pvt Ltd

Viraj Tower-2, 4259/3, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj,
New Delhi-110 002, India
Phone : 91-11-45355555

E-mail: contact@printspublications.com
Website: www.printspublications.com

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The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) is a New Delhi-based think tank set up with the collaborative efforts of India's leading security experts, diplomats and philanthropists under the aegis of the Vivekananda Kendra. The VIF's objective is to become a centre of excellence to kick start innovative ideas and thoughts that can lead to a stronger, secure and prosperous India playing its destined role in global affairs.

About the Journal

National Security is a policy-oriented quarterly journal of the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. It focuses on the principal issues and trends in India's increasingly complex national and international security environment. The journal carries holistic analysis and informed debates on all aspects of security and has emerged as an important forum for top thinkers, policy experts, and academics from India and abroad. It also aims to meet the needs of an international readership that is increasingly interested in India's security policies as its role in world affairs grows. Recent issues of the journal have covered a wide variety of vital themes: India's two-front security challenge, the Indo-Pacific and Quad, developments in China and India-China relations, Pakistan, nuclear doctrine, BIMSTEC, the status of Tibet, defence policy, terrorism, the scientific revolution and security, and nationalism.

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e-ISSN :2581-9658(0)

Published and Printed on behalf of Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF),
by Mr. Pranav Gupta, Prints Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, India.

National Security

A Quarterly Journal of the VIF

Volume 9 Issue 4 October - December 2026

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Editor's Note

Discerning the Fog of War

Seven months into yet another protracted war in West Asia it is valid to ask why the world has been repeatedly plunged into multiple long drawn and bitter wars since the end of the Cold War, though the promise by the victor (the United States) was to usher in a new dawn of liberal peace and prosperity. Much like in 1945 San Francisco, when the victorious Allies of the Second World War sat together to frame the United Nations Charter and promised to build a new rule based global institutional order that would protect sovereignty of states, ensure great power amity, global security and peace, but were overwhelmed by the Cold War, the 1990-91 moment of great power détente and promised peace was a brief, fleeting, deceptive phase that met a similar tragic fate. As the world watches the rapid widening of the war zone beyond Iran and the Gulf to the wider Middle East, it is necessary to grasp the forces and ideas that drive America's perpetual wars that threaten to trigger wider global conflagration.

A longer perspective of the past 80 years since World War-II is useful for a clearer understanding of the factors that drive the repeated recourse to large scale wars by the US. Since 1945-47, powerful forces have risen within the US and the Atlantic alliance which believed that if adequate military and economic pressure was brought on a weaker Soviet Union/ Russia, the latter would retreat and weaken, paving the way for global 'pax Americana'. State Department's Director, Policy Planning George F Kennan's initial proposal for a defensive 'containment' became an offensive policy under hardline political, policy and military leaders. President Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze were the principal architects of a militarised global 'containment' strategy articulated in NSC-68 (National Security Council document 68, 1950) to achieve that goal. It also had among its influential political backers the wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. President Truman himself, and his Chief of Staff of the Army George C Marshall, among others. A significant section of the ruling Democratic Party and the policy community was by then globalist and believed that America's industrial and military advantages at the end of World War need to be translated into a strategy for primacy that would secure the expanding military, security, economic and global interests of the US. The consequence was four decades of the Cold War, US-Soviet nuclear arms race and near wars over Berlin in 1948 and Cuba in 1962, devastating wars in Korea and Vietnam, and multiple military interventions and regime change operations.

(ii) Editor's Note

The Soviet withdrawal from the Cold War under Gorbachev and its disintegration in 1991 only strengthened the resolve among the hawks within the American 'deep state' and political strategists in both Democratic and Republican parties, such as former Carter Administration's National Security Advisor and Russophobe Zbigniew Brzezinski to dominate and further weaken Russia. The 1992 Defense Planning Guidance, prepared by Under Secretary for Policy Paul Wolfowitz in the Bush Sr. Administration, was the foundational document for the Hawks. Intellectuals such as Robert Kagan—the author of *The Gentle Hegemony*, Charles Krauthammer who coined the term 'unipolar moment', liberal thinker Francis Fukuyama who proclaimed the 'End of History' and the triumph of liberal democracy—all supported, in one or the other, US liberal hegemony and democracy promotion as ideological missions.

As in the critical five years in the late 1940s, the hardline architects of US policy came from two ideologically different camps that converged—the liberal internationalists and the conservative primacists. The Clinton administration (Democratic) worked on both the military and the liberal agendas with democratic 'engagement and enlargement' as the stated goal. It kept NATO intact though the Warsaw Pact had been dismantled by the Soviet Union, and in 1999 began the process of its eastward expansion in Europe towards the Russian frontier by inducting Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. It may be recalled that US Secretary of State James Baker had in 1990 promised Gorbachev that NATO would not expand "one inch eastward". The process of expansion would be robustly taken forward by the Bush Jr Administration (Republican) between 2004-2008 when the three Baltic states bordering Russia were inducted. NATO now directly bordered Russia. By 2008, NATO had announced its plan to induct Ukraine and Georgia—both bordering Russia and the critical maritime space of the Black Sea—laying the ground for the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Bush Jr. administration advisers were unabashed hawks. They included Dick Cheney (who served as Secretary of Defence under Bush Senior and was the Vice President with Bush Jr), Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, John Bolton, Richard Perle, among others. They were all part of the neo-conservative network called the *Project for a New American Century* (PNAC) that worked for a strong military, unabashed 'unipolarity', interventions and regime change operations. Their 2000 report "Rebuilding America's Defenses" called for a USD 100 billion increase in the Defence budget, missile defence, and permanent presence in the Gulf. Between 1999 and 2023, NATO was expanded from 16 to 32 states covering virtually the entire Europe and touching the greater part of the Russian frontier. With the focus from 2014 onwards moving to Ukraine, the ground for war had been laid.

Legacy of the Wars of 'Primacy'

The US is currently engaged in wars on two fronts: in Europe, where with its support its European allies actively back Ukraine against Russia; and in West Asia, where it joined the war on Iran in support of Israel and then made it its own mission. Neither war was necessary. Both stem from American hubris rooted in the imperial ideology of “unipolarity”—the belief that the US should act as a global hegemon and that its liberal ideology, market economy, and democratic model represent the ideal form of the state. Hence, it must be replicated worldwide as components of a “liberal international order” (LIO) which would ensure peace, interdependence, and growth. In practice, however, the LIO was a deceptive order designed to serve core US foreign policy, security, and economic interests. Outside the West, few states fully embraced this liberal ideology, market economy, or democratic model. India, the world’s largest democracy, for example, followed its own politico-cultural traditions and developed constitutional, democratic, and economic arrangements that rejected extreme individualism market fundamentalism, and laissez-faire economics. Given its independent policy approach, it has had a difficult relationship with America. The US instead has had historically multiple allies among leading post-War autocracies, such as those in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Shah ruled Iran, Salazar’s Portugal, apartheid South Africa, the juntas in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Suharto’s Indonesia, Marcos’ Philippines, etc. In pursuit of its globalism, the US has engaged in numerous regime-change operations since the early 1990s. Almost all have been selectively focused on strong, nationalist, independent regimes—Serbia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yanukovych led Ukraine, Bangladesh, Iran. All of them have involved US backed street uprisings, civil wars and direct military operations, and protracted instabilities and wars.

The relentless effort to sustain American global primacy has come at a great cost – to the victim states, the world and the US itself. An estimate by *The Cost of War Project* at Brown University indicates that the US has spent USD 8 to 10 trillion on wars and military operations between 1990-91 Gulf War and 2025. Since then, the figure has gone up significantly as the war against Iran rages, and support for Ukraine—though somewhat reduced under Trump—continues. The world economy is undergoing an energy crisis, immense disruptions and distress affecting all states because of America’s endless wars and its extensive sanctions on trade and economic ties with Russia and Iran. Despite Trump’s initial efforts to reach an agreement with Putin, there has been an absence of will in Washington to engage in sustained and sincere diplomacy to call off its war against Iran, or the reckless NATO expansion that fomented Russian military operation against Ukraine. There is a real prospect that either of these conflicts could ominously spiral out of control if the US fails to bring them to an early end.

Ironically, the US has a poor record in both swiftly winning or ending wars since the 1990s. Yet wars have gained a life and rationale of their own as they serve significant domestic interest groups—political, business, and military. In none of the major wars that the US has initiated since World War II, has it had a clear 'victory' despite years of military action. From the stalemate in Korea, to the defeat in Vietnam, the human tragedy and quagmire in Iraq, or the failed regime change war against the Taliban in Afghanistan—the US has waged large scale devastating wars in which several millions have been killed. International law has been wantonly flouted. However, the mission of sustaining 'unipolarity' has become increasingly elusive. The rise of China and the re-emergence of Russia as a leading global actor means Washington needs to take their security and economic interests into account in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, if conflicts and wars are to be avoided. By disregarding this changed reality, the US and its NATO allies have dragged Europe and Russia into a dangerous war that is now in its fifth year, while another protracted war expands in West Asia.

At home, US economic power has been weakened by the flight of manufacturing to China, Southeast Asia and Mexico, while the software development and research for the global corporations are increasingly done in India. The rapid spread of AI in manufacturing has introduced fresh challenges of employment within the working classes and segments of the middle class. Rising military expenditure and wars have pushed its debt to over USD 40 trillion, and constrained expenditure on healthcare, infrastructure, housing that the people need. High Inflation fuelled by war in the Gulf is diminishing incomes. Elite consensus on policy has increasingly broken down, and the polity is deeply divided. The people want an end to US war addiction and had elected Trump to bring this about. Trump has dismantled the liberal imperial agenda and undermined the institutional structure that had been constructed since 1945, only to embrace alternative drivers for ensuring primacy. The Israeli lobby and the vast military-industrial complex (MIC) that includes some of the largest global companies such as Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Boeing are among the leading political funders and gainers from his embrace of coups, interventions and wars as strategy. The MIC promotes conditions that make wars more likely and longer by funding voices for interventions in the Congress, among think tanks, and media. They also profit from global US military presence and high defence expenditure.

The US needs to jettison its hubris and its imperial ideology so that the world can be more peaceful and the people feel secure. Ambiguous and heightened threats used by Trump and some of his advisors against Iran carry serious risks of escalation. Russian President Putin has warned that continued Western arming, financing and backing to Ukraine's military, as well as its long-range missile and drone attacks on Russian energy,

communication, maritime and civilian assets could lead to uncontrolled escalation and set off a nuclear crisis. The drive to ensure global dominance rather than peaceful coexistence and a stable balance of power with the Soviet Union had triggered the four decades of Cold War in 1946-47. By pursuing a similar mission against both Russia and China, it has sharpened a revived great power contest and raised the stakes in the US-Israel-Iran war in Asia and in Europe.

Prognosis

Wars today are increasingly complex and all consuming. Their steady evolution as multidimensional operations that cover land, water, air, space, cyber, electromagnetic spectrum and AI, has raised the threats to humanity manifold. The US leads the world in the technology of warfare as well as the global arms race. It has inevitably drawn in China, Russia and others in an increasingly escalating arms race. Old arms control agreements have been set aside by the Trump administration and the resolve to dominate all others remains undiminished. It is high time the US electorate restrains its war-loving leadership and the 'deep state' that has laid the foundations of America's strategy for primacy eight decades ago and has continued to nurture them at every new stage of recent history.

In this Issue

This special issue of the *National Security* journal is dedicated to exploring different dimensions of emerging warfare and India's military preparedness for dealing with them.

It begins with an incisive analysis by former Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan (Retd.) that examines the two front challenges posed by Pakistan and China. He argues that a joint conventional war by the two states remains highly unlikely. However, growing China-Pakistan collusion through intelligence, military support and diplomacy poses a significant threat. Lieutenant General Rakesh Sharma (Retd.) in his judicious analysis of the lessons from recent conflicts, highlights the gaps between political and military objectives, and the issues relating to battlefield transparency, cyber warfare, advancement in drone warfare and air defence. He emphasises India's need for resilience and new modes of deterrence. Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.) examines the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) amidst US-China rivalry, contested chokepoints and shifting alliances. He argues that India faces a Chinese-dominated single-front threat across land and sea, requiring urgent expansion of submarine programmes, aircraft carriers, drones and missile defence.

In the fourth essay, Vice Admiral Satish Soni (Retd.) examines Pakistan's naval modernisation under Vision 2030, highlighting the acquisition of submarines, frigates,

drones and precision-strike systems developed with Chinese and Turkish collaboration. Pakistan's steps toward a sea-based nuclear deterrent and growing strategic convergence with its principal defence partners pose challenges to Indian naval operations and increase miscalculation risks. Air Marshal Rajesh Kumar (Retd.) in his insightful article focuses on the growing China-Pakistan strategic partnership and expanding defence cooperation.

Arms control expert Dr. Manpreet Sethi, in her important article, examines the decline of nuclear arms control arrangements and agreements amid growing competition and technological challenges. She advocates flexible "nuclear risk control" measures for India and cautious confidence-building with China and Pakistan. In his article, scholar Dr. Vishwajeet Singh Akhawat explores the changing US approach towards Iran and the consequences of the ongoing war. He argues that the conflict has consolidated Iran's internal security apparatus and enhanced its regional influence.

In the book review segment, Dr. Arvind Gupta reviews Vivek Chadha's *Mahabharata's Strategic Insights: Navigating the Dharmic Compass*, which challenges the view that India lacks a strategic culture. The author explains how Dharma offers a flexible framework for statecraft, warfare and strategic decision-making. The review calls for a wider study of Indian strategic traditions in universities and greater scholarly engagement with indigenous thought. Dr. Annpurna Nautiyal reviews Amb. Satish Chandra's *India-Pakistan Relations: A Saga of Unending Disputes*, that traces the historical disputes that have shaped bilateral relations since Partition. The review highlights the book's detailed coverage of the Kashmir issue, the wars, terrorism and other enduring contentious issues. Amb. Chandra has spent a significant number of years serving in Pakistan and analysing its policies towards India in various capacities. His expertise is widely recognised. His book is a valuable addition to the field of India-Pakistan studies.

The issue offers a valuable analysis and prognosis on recent and ongoing wars. It is likely to be of abiding interest to the readers of NS, especially those interested in military affairs.

Prof. Sujit Dutta
Editor, *National Security*

Article

China-Pakistan Strategic Alliance: Military and Security Implications

Rajesh Kumar

Abstract

To a student of geopolitics in Asia, the strategic relationship between China and Pakistan is known to be an “all weather” one. China has supported Pakistan on many occasions since the 1970s but in the twenty-first century, this support has turned into an alliance without formally being declared as one. Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his address to Pakistan’s parliament in April 2015, described this bilateral relationship as “taller than mountains, deeper than oceans, and sweeter than honey.”¹ In an essay published in the Global Times in 2022, Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, wrote: “To a historian, the geographical proximity and commonality of past experiences may have brought us together. But for us in Pakistan and in true essence, fraternal bonds between our two peoples are much deeper, transcending the general precepts of inter-state ties and uniting us in an eternal and timeless relationship.”²

In January 2023, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a press release that during a telephone call between Premier Li Keqiang and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Premier emphasised that “*the China-Pakistan friendship has stood the test of international vicissitudes and grown from strength to strength. China always sees China-Pakistan relations as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy, and will continue to support Pakistan*

Air Marshal Rajesh Kumar retired from the Indian Air Force after 39 years of service. He is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College at Montgomery, Alabama as well as College of Defence Management at Secunderabad and holds a Master’s degree in Management Studies. He was the C-in-C of the Strategic Forces Command and has published articles in various journals with an emphasis on nuclear policy.

The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not reflect the journal’s policy.

This article was received from the author on May 29, 2026.

National Security Vol. 9, No. 4, 2026
(October - December 2026) Page 557-569, ISSN 25-81-9658 (O)
©Vivekananda International Foundation

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.32381/NS.2026.09.04.5>

*in safeguarding national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate rights and interests, upholding domestic solidarity and stability and realising national development and rejuvenation.”*³ Both sides have, therefore, reiterated their commitment towards this special relationship and continue to emphasise it during the visits of senior functionaries to each other’s countries. While the diplomatic signalling is explicit, there are dimensions to the relationship that are not so explicit and need to be explored.

The bilateral military and strategic linkages between China and Pakistan, and the nature and evolution of their defence cooperation, and their impact on regional security, have defined India’s strategic posture. In the current geopolitical flux, the role of broader international actors, including the United States, will also shape Sino-Pakistan strategic behaviour. In the present geopolitical scenario, wherein use of kinetic action is emerging as an instrument of choice to impose political will, combined with rapidly evolving new technologies of warfighting and the hybridisation of warfare, the strategic alignment between China and Pakistan poses significant security challenges for India. For India to respond to such challenges, it would have to assess emerging threats, prepare policy responses and carry out doctrinal shifts where needed. Whatever be the nature of response, the increasing collusion between the two states that sit on India’s western and northern borders and share a de facto border between them, cannot be ignored. This is especially true in the newer technological domains, where China has leapfrogged significantly in the last few years. This technological surge, coupled with China’s proven ability to scale manufacturing, could significantly upgrade Pakistan’s strategic capabilities in a short period of time, leading to deterrence challenges for India.

The bilateral military and strategic linkages between China and Pakistan, and the nature and evolution of their defence cooperation, and their impact on regional security, has defined India’s strategic posture.

Military and Defence Cooperation

Sino-Pakistan defence relations have been cordial since the 1965 war with India but gained momentum after the collapse of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in the late-1970s. Pakistan looked eastward suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of India in 1971 and its perceived loss of importance to the United States in the following years. It was in search of a strategic partner and an “all weather” friend. Pakistan also needed a member nation which had veto powers in the United Nations after the Shimla Pact, and therefore, leaned on

China to provide necessary security guarantees. Economically, it also made sense to go in for cheaper Chinese military equipment to increase numbers. Thus, the mid and late seventies were characterised by the transfer of low-cost conventional Chinese equipment like the T-59/ T-69 main battle tanks (Chinese derivatives of the Soviet T-54/55 tanks), F-6 and F-7 fighter aircraft (Chinese derivatives of the MiG-19 and MiG-21, respectively). Also purchased were HJ-73 ATGM anti-tank guided missiles (the Chinese version of the Soviet Union's Sagger Missile), artillery systems of various calibers and small naval craft such as fast attack and patrol craft. This trend continued through the 1980s, though by then China was secretly supporting Pakistan in a far more significant way — aiding its nuclear weapon programme. In time, this collaboration would continue to grow in both the conventional and the nuclear sectors with far reaching strategic consequences for India and the region.

Strategic Rationale

The glue that held this relationship together was China's willingness to support Pakistan's efforts to balance India even as China itself was passing through a transition in its military capabilities, and perhaps, could not commit its most modern weaponry to the western theatre. The 1990s saw deeper strategic cooperation as Pakistan faced US sanctions under the Pressler Amendment. China became Pakistan's fallback supplier of military hardware during periods of Western sanctions. During this period, the Chinese supplied fighters were upgraded (F-7 PG) and the co-production of the Karakoram K-8 trainer aircraft was started. The roots of joint production of military systems can be traced to this period. Also, significantly, missile transfers and missile production assistance was started. The M-11 ballistic missiles were transferred and their production facilities were set up in Pakistan along with technology transfer. In addition, T-85IIAP tanks and air defence radars were sold to Pakistan by China.

The 2000s marked the transformation of China-Pakistan defence ties into a comprehensive strategic partnership, in which co-development and licensed production became central to this relationship. The joint development of the JF-17 Thunder fighter, the Al-Khalid Main Battle Tank (MBT) project and F-22 frigates was undertaken during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In addition, LY-80/ HQ-16 Air Defence Systems and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) were also transferred. Pakistan, which had hitherto relied on the western Crotale Systems for its Air Defence, made a decisive shift towards Chinese Air Defence systems. Thus, not only the width of the relationship, but also the depth grew during this period. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that between 2012–2016, almost two-thirds of arms imports by Pakistan were of Chinese origin.⁴

This accelerating trend in arms transfers, joint development and production has continued through the 2010s and 2020s. China has supplied Pakistan with advanced systems, including J-10CE fighters, HQ-9/P air defence systems, VT-4 main battle tanks, Wing Loong and CH-4 UAVs, and SH-15 truck-mounted artillery, helping Pakistan sustain military parity and deterrence credibility vis-à-vis India. The most visible programme of the current era is the supply and subsequent co-production of Hangor-class submarines equipped with Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP), enabling Pakistan to strengthen its deterrence posture against India in the Arabian Sea. Pakistan has also increasingly integrated Chinese technologies into indigenous production at facilities such as the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) Kamra for aircraft assembly, Heavy Industries Taxila for tank production, and Karachi Shipyard for naval construction, supporting upgrades and faster output. According to SIPRI estimates, China delivered major arms to 44 states in 2020–2024, but nearly two-thirds of its arms exports—63 percent—went to Pakistan alone. Chinese arms transfers to Pakistan have therefore evolved from basic conventional equipment deliveries into one of the world’s deepest strategic defence partnerships, spanning land, air, naval, missile and air defence domains. This military relationship continues to grow and is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

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Nuclear, Missile and Space Collaboration

The Sino-Pakistan military cooperation also extends to the nuclear deterrence domain. China’s continued support for Pakistan’s ballistic missile programme has enabled Pakistan to increase the range and accuracy of its missiles and also led it to aspire for MIRV capability. A recent analysis by a leading expert indicates the extent of the collaboration: *“China has transferred 34 M-11, road-mobile, short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) with related technology and manufacturing capability to Pakistan. Despite Chinese pledges to the contrary, it has continued to provide Pakistan with specialty steels, guidance systems and technical expertise in the latter’s effort to develop long-range ballistic missiles. Hatf, Shaheen and Anza series of missiles have been built using Chinese assistance.”*⁵ The Chinese-supplied

Hangor-class submarines are also reported to be capable of launching nuclear capable cruise missiles. Thus, China has not only modernised Pakistan's conventional capability, but also actively participated in the acceleration of its nuclear delivery platforms that enabled a full spectrum deterrence policy against India.

In the nuclear weapons domain, Chinese assistance has been visible in three areas. Firstly, assistance in the setting up of reactors capable of producing weapons-grade Plutonium. Secondly, assistance in the setting up of nuclear reprocessing facilities to extract nuclear fuel, and finally, the passing on of nuclear weapons design. As Ashley Tellis notes in his book, *"Striking Asymmetries"*, *"Pakistan began constructing its first weapons reactor at Khushab with Chinese assistance sometime in 1987. Today, the Khushab complex consists of four heavy water reactors whose plutonium output is dedicated solely for weapons"*⁶. He also notes, *"at the time of the 1998 tests, Pakistan's weapons were derived directly from the Chinese CHIC-4 uranium-based design that Islamabad received in the early 1980s."*⁷ This claim of Chinese assisted nuclear weapon design is further buttressed by the fact that Pakistan was able to test its nuclear weapons on May 28 and May 30, 1998, just days after India had conducted its nuclear tests. This would not have been possible if the proven design was not available at hand. There is a suspicion that the Chinese had tested a Pakistani nuclear device earlier at Lop Nor, but this claim has not been proven.

This level of assistance in the nuclear weapons programme is unprecedented for any country. This active cooperation in the nuclear field has continued after the 1998 tests. The earlier warhead designs have been refined with Chinese assistance to create variants of different sizes and yields, to be used in missiles such as the M-11, Ghauri, Ghaznavi-I and the Nasr, to eventually create a variety of delivery platforms ranging from the strategic to the tactical. The latest example of this cooperation is the assistance in developing the third leg of the nuclear triad to Pakistan by providing warhead design for the sea-launched cruise missile on the Hangor-class submarines. The Chinese aim is to lock India into a permanent nuclear deterrence race against Pakistan while expanding their own arsenal at breakneck speed, including the expansion of dual warhead-equipped missile brigades in its Western Theatre Command that primarily overlooks India. This trend of cooperation in the nuclear domain is likely to continue, albeit at a slower pace, as China reaches the limits of what technology it can realistically transfer.

In the space domain, cooperation has been expanding steadily. As more and more Chinese military equipment enters Pakistani inventory, so has the penetration of the Beidou Satellite Positioning Navigation and Timing (PNT) information become more widespread in the Pakistani military ecosystem. According to Ukrainian researchers, Sino-

Pakistan cooperation in the space sector, has now taken on a more formal status following the establishment of the Space Silk Road Initiative in 2014.⁸ Among other things, this initiative envisages improvement in the Beidou System to benefit both countries. It has also *“led to the establishment of a direct partnership between Pakistan’s Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and China’s National Space Administration (CNSA) in 2019.”*⁹ The result of such cooperation is that Pakistan not only has the benefit of using two constellations, viz. GPS and Beidou, but also benefits from the integration of networking between the BeiDou System and Chinese military equipment, leading to a more synergised use of Chinese military hardware.

In the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) segment of space, Pakistan now has access to data from the Yaogan and Gaofen series of satellites that enable near real time coverage over specific areas of interest. In addition, Chinese geospatial intelligence companies such as MizarVision, which leverages high-resolution commercial imagery from Chinese and Western providers combine it with AI-driven analysis, besides sharing it publicly on platforms, also specially assist Pakistan. This kind of analysis turns ‘open-source’ data into near-real-time tactical intelligence that benefit combat operations. Recently, MizarVision was sanctioned by USA for providing satellite imagery that enabled Iran’s military strikes against American troops in the Middle East and for their claim of tracking US B-2 bombers during the conflict.¹⁰ China has been launching satellites for Pakistan on its rockets for long. However, some significant launches have taken place recently that include the H1 hyperspectral imaging satellite in October 2025, the PRSC-EO3—an AI-enabled electro-optical remote sensing satellite in April 2026, and the PRSC-S1 Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) in July 2025 that have boosted Pakistan’s ISR capability. The PRSC-EO3 and PRSC-S1 are drawing attention for their unusual orbits that are complementary and appear optimised for persistent surveillance over Southern Asia, rather than global remote sensing, as claimed by both countries.¹¹

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Future short and long-term plans include the launch of a Pakistani astronaut to the Chinese international space station in 2026 and the launch of a mission to the Moon in 2035.

Hence, it is safe to conclude that space collaboration, especially in the military segment, is also on an upward trend. It must be kept in mind also that China has considerable counter space capabilities, including anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles, ground based Electronic Warfare and Co-orbital systems. In 2024, a Chinese satellite manoeuvred within one kilometre of an Indian Electrooptical satellite in low earth orbit¹², causing considerable concern in Indian defence circles. How much of these counterspace capabilities would be transferred to Pakistan is something that will need to be watched in the future?

Another domain where close coordination has been observed is in Information warfare. During the initial hours of “Operation Sindoor”, Pakistan claimed the downing of multiple Indian fighter jets, including multiple Rafales.

Chinese media amplified this news, especially the *Global Times* and some Chinese international television channels. According to a United Service Institution report, *“The Chinese media played an active role in shaping perceptions amplifying Pakistan’s propaganda. The digital landscape also underscored China’s active alignment with Pakistan’s strategic messaging which included celebrating the alleged success of Chinese-origin military platforms deployed by Pakistan.”*¹³ While

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Pakistan’s connections with the international media are well known, this coordinated amplification by Chinese media made it difficult for India to push its global narrative.

Impact on Regional Security

The manner in which the military alliance has played out poses a two-front challenge to India. Future scenarios require planning for a war that would need attention on both fronts. Even if the possibility of direct intervention on the border with China is discounted in a war with Pakistan, China’s considerable defence industrial capacity would enable Pakistan to sustain the war for a much longer period, much like Ukraine sustaining its war against Russia. As far as border crises go, while China may pressure India on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in a war with Pakistan, Pakistan will surely fish in troubled waters should a similar crisis surface between India and China. It would be useful to note here that since the Galwan Crisis of 2020, China is yet to withdraw its troops from Eastern Ladakh. Currently, almost 50,000 troops are actively deployed on each side in the area.

Should “Operation Sindoor” have escalated further, these troops would not have been available to carry out operations on the Line of Control (LoC).

Thus, both in terms of industrial capacity and capability to exert pressure on the border, China acts as a strategic equaliser for Pakistan. In the past, many strategic “experts” had doubted the possibility of China and Pakistan acting together to escalate a crisis with India. However, reality has finally dawned on the strategic community in India. Strategic pundits who had rejected India’s two-front challenge despite the Indian armed forces assertion of the same, now concur with the latter’s view.

Even before “Operation Sindoor”, the armed forces had anticipated Chinese support to Pakistan, given that there was almost a two-week gap between the Pahalgam attack and the first Indian strike. What was perhaps underestimated was the level of sophistication this collaboration would reach. On July 4, 2025, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Rahul R. Singh, said in an interview that China was an ever-present factor bolstering Pakistan’s military efforts through unprecedented battlefield collusion, including live intelligence inputs.¹⁴ *“When DGM0-level talks were going on, Pakistan was actually mentioning that we know your important vector is primed, and it is ready for action. I would request you to pull it back. So, they were getting live inputs... from China,”* he said.¹⁵ What was perhaps a further underestimation was this support morphing into active participation. According to a recent news

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report, *“China has confirmed providing on-site technical support to Pakistan during last year’s conflict with India. Engineers from China’s Aviation Industry Corporation detailed their challenging wartime role, assisting Pakistan’s J-10CE fighter jets. This marks the first public admission of Chinese personnel involvement in such operations.”*¹⁶

The admission validates longstanding concerns regarding deep defence coordination between Beijing and Islamabad, confirming that Chinese personnel actively assisted Pakistani forces against India. With Pakistan being the leading recipient of Chinese armaments worth almost US\$20 billion, it was necessary for China to display the capabilities of these weapons. Hence, the “no holds barred” approach to cooperation between both sides. While such active cooperation was noticed in observable domains, in other domains, such as cyber, space and information, it was possibly harder to notice and

prove. Nevertheless, fingerprints of close collaboration are seen in these domains as well. There are portents for the future as well, for example, the intensified naval cooperation between China and Pakistan, which will invariably put maritime domain pressure on India.

This close collaboration between Pakistan and China has a destabilising effect on regional security. Instead of dyads, this alliance creates a complex triangular deterrence structure, one that allows elements of sub-conventional warfare, conventional warfare and nuclear deterrence to exist in any crisis. It emboldens Pakistan to continue to follow its terrorism policy against India not only under the nuclear shadow, but also under Chinese benevolence. Hybrid warfare and grey zone tactics start becoming more prominent, leading to a crisis surfacing at frequent intervals. As far as crisis stability is concerned, this collusion emboldens risk taking by Pakistan, something that could lead to uncontrolled escalation. China could also cause crisis instability in certain situations. There could be a scenario, wherein, an Indian strike on a Pakistani airfield causing the death of Chinese support personnel, gives China an excuse to intervene directly or indirectly. These are uncharted waters and, as the relationship between Pakistan and China continues to deepen; such scenarios have to be planned for.

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Geopolitical Considerations

The current geopolitical state is characterised by uncertainty. With two major wars in progress and the lone superpower—the USA—practising transactional foreign relations, international institutions are now bystanders. With the “rule of law” giving way to “might is right”, many nations are scrambling to form new partnerships to safeguard their national interests. The deterrence triangle of India-China-Pakistan is no exception. The current competition between the USA and China has brought China and Pakistan closer. The USA is also fine with this as long as Pakistan does its bidding in West Asia. It reminds one of the 1980s and 1990s, when the USA looked the other way as China merrily built Pakistan’s nuclear deterrent. India’s relationship with the USA is characterised by a trust deficit because of the latter supplying arms to Pakistan regularly. The relationship between

China and Russia has also evolved to a stage wherein, during a conflict between India and China, Russian assistance could be lesser than it was in the past. India, therefore, must manage this India-China-Pakistan deterrence triangle on its own.

In strategic terms, diplomatic support to Pakistan by China has been in consonance with Pakistan's point of view. Since 2019, Chinese statements on Jammu and Kashmir seem to be echoing Pakistan's narrative. After the Pahalgam attack on April 22, 2025, China again echoed Pakistan's view, calling for a "quick investigation". China also collaborated with Pakistan in diluting the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Press Statement, excising any direct reference to The Resistance Front (TRF), the group behind the Pahalgam attack.¹⁷ The Chinese official statement on India's response to the Pahalgam terror attack was to term the strike as "regrettable".¹⁸ In the SCO meeting that followed "Operation Sindoor", India's stand on terror attacks was not included in the draft communiqué, leading to the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh refusing to sign the document on June 25, 2025.¹⁹ Therefore, India will have to put out its narrative in more forceful terms while anticipating a combined Pakistan-China response.

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China's investment in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) gives it a strong incentive to continue its support to Pakistan in all strategic spheres. This is especially true in the backdrop of the current West Asia crisis. China has strong stakes in Iran and Pakistan is key to their interests there in the current geopolitical situation.

Future Trends and Challenges

The alliance between Pakistan and China will continue to strengthen given current geopolitical factors. It suits China to use Pakistan as a cat's paw against India. Pakistan, with its deep-rooted hostility towards India, is glad to have a major power like China on its side. Bilateral collaboration in all domains of security and warfighting will continue to increase and Pakistan will continue to benefit from Chinese technology and industrial capacity. A current indicator of future trends is the expected delivery of the fifth generation J-35 stealth aircraft to Pakistan from China that is expected by the end of 2026 or early 2027.²⁰ India, therefore, will need to study all Chinese weapons and their capabilities carefully and develop counter mechanisms to deal with this collusive threat. There are, however, limits to what technology China will transfer to Pakistan. China reportedly refused to help

Pakistan when the latter faced an issue with the Babur-3 Submarine Launched Cruise Missile over fears of violating global non-proliferation commitments.²¹

Despite helping with warhead designs, there are red lines that China may not cross. In spite of such limits, Pakistan will continue to be a state with almost 80 percent weaponry and equipment of Chinese origin. China will continue to test these weapons in future crises, in order to further refine them and make them available to Pakistan. A great deal of training through the Shaheen series of exercises is being done between the two countries. China wants access to Western tactics, as it does not conduct exercises with Western nations, which is something that Pakistan does. Therefore, when India does face a crisis along the LAC, it will face upgraded tactics and training from the Chinese side.

India will need to militarily secure itself and build its economy to face the upgraded challenges it faces from China and Pakistan. The next crisis will not be like the last one. It will more likely be a multi-domain triangular entanglement embedded within larger great-power competition. It will be characterised by usage of high technology including AI and could remain a hybrid conflict below the threshold of war because of the nuclear overhang. It will nevertheless have a rapid escalation potential which will have to be managed. India must prepare itself to upgrade technology and adopt a whole of nation approach to face this rapidly evolving challenge that it confronts over multiple domains.

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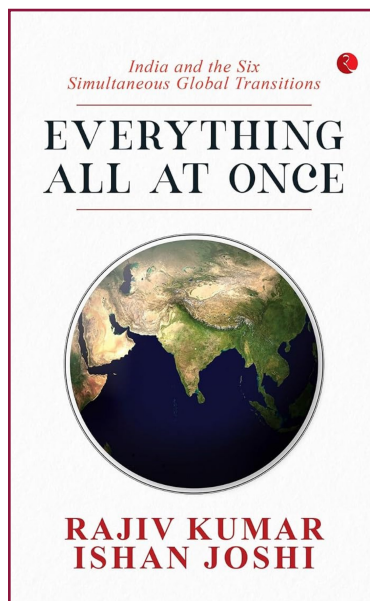
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Everything All At Once: India and the Six Simultaneous Global Transitions

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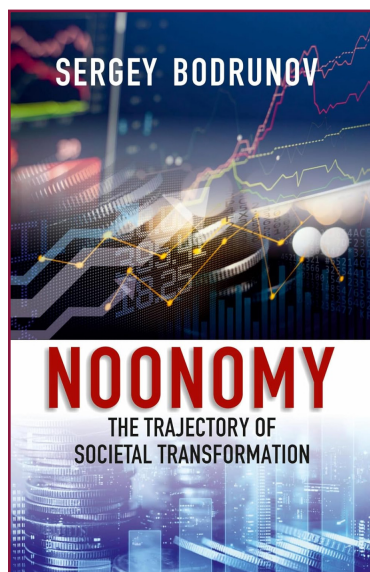
New Delhi has a historic opportunity to shape the ongoing transitions to its advantage. But the challenges are massive. Business-as-usual just won't do if we want to see India as Viksit Bharat in the next 25 years. An innovative and flexible policy framework has to be the sine qua non going forward. Forging a 'Coalition of the Willing' to deal with the six simultaneous transitions facing India and the Global South is critical. Its components would include but not be limited to urgently tackling the looming climate catastrophe; adapting frontier technologies including AI to our advantage; and ensuring our strategic autonomy to deal with the passing of Pax Americana and the Rise of China.

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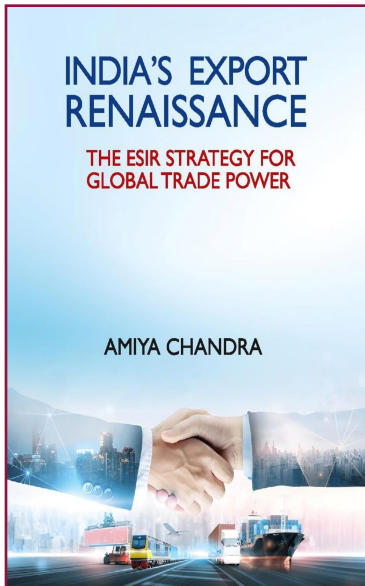
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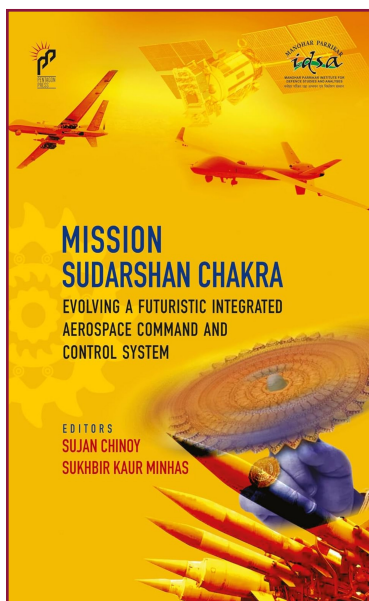
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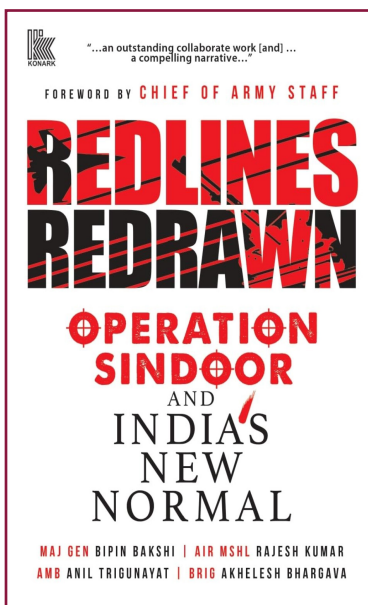
Drawing inspiration from the Sudarshan Chakra of the Mahabharata, this book examines India's quest for an invincible aero-space defence "kavach" in an era of multi-domain warfare. As threats from conventional and hypersonic missiles, drones and stand-off weapons intensify, the book analyses India's futuristic project-Mission Sudarshan Chakra-an ambitious, indigenous initiative to build a multi-layered Integrated Air and Missile Defence shield. The volume blends analytical insight with practical experience to deepen public understanding of India's evolving national security architecture.

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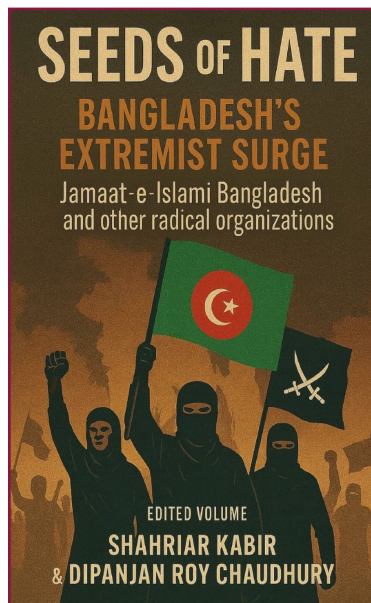
In May 2025, India's Operation Sindoor shook the subcontinent with the precision and force of a nation unwilling to cede space to terror. Triggered by the 22 April massacre of 23 Hindu tourists in Pahalgam by three Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists, the operation marked India's calibrated and proportionate response to Pakistan's deep-state-driven provocation. This timely volume brings together four distinguished experts who dissect the build-up, execution, and ramifications of Operation Sindoor, offering rare clarity on India's evolving security posture.

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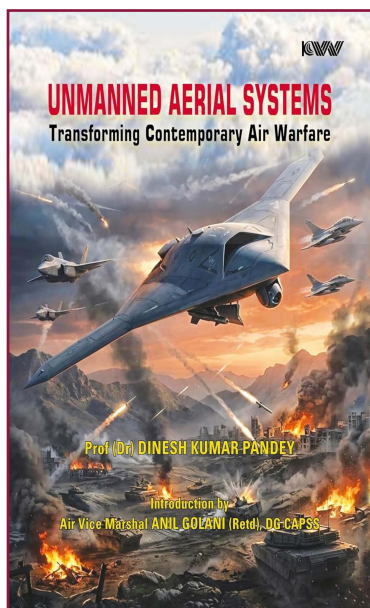
The book investigates how Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and affiliated radical groups have entrenched themselves in the country's political, social, and educational fabric. It traces the ideological roots of these organizations, their violent past during Bangladesh's Liberation War, and their continuing influence in mainstream politics and society. The contributors dissect the methods of radicalization, including manipulation of madrasa networks, infiltration of student unions, misuse of charities and NGOs, and the exploitation of religious identity for political gain. The volume also highlights the international linkages of these groups, with counterparts in Pakistan, the Middle East, and beyond and how these transnational networks fuel extremism within Bangladesh.

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Unmanned Aerial Systems : Transforming Contemporary Air Warfare

| KW Publishers, 2026



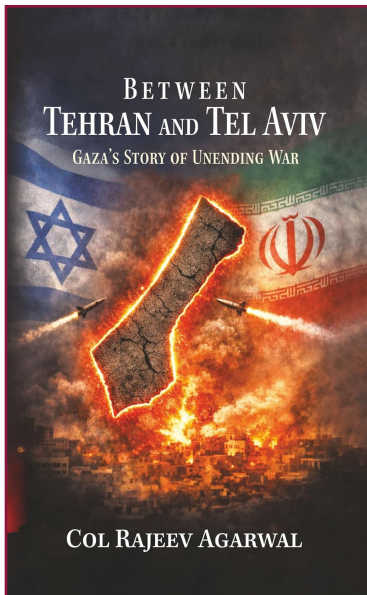
This book examines how Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) have evolved from basic reconnaissance tools into sophisticated platforms for strike operations, electronic warfare, and strategic deterrence. It highlights their impact on the "kill chain" and battlespace awareness through persistent ISR and algorithmic targeting. The book explores this transformation through three perspectives, beginning with the technological evolution of UAS and the debate over manned versus unmanned air power, while assessing their growing influence on modern warfare.

Author: *Prof (Dr) Dinesh Kumar Pandey*

ISBN : 9788199705753 | **Price :** ₹ 1480

Between Tehran and Tel Aviv : Gaza's Story of Unending War

| Pentagon Press LLP, 2026



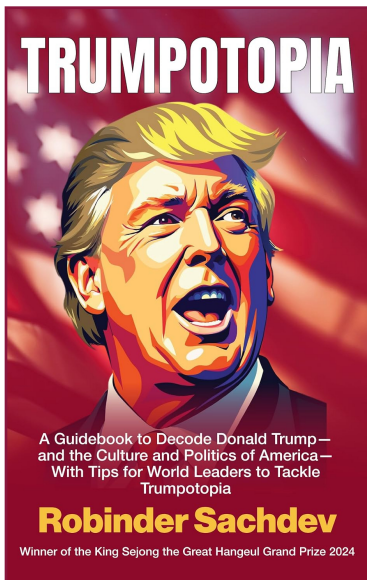
West Asia's shifting political and strategic landscape forms the backdrop of this book, as it traces the collapse of regional diplomatic hopes following the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack and the devastating war that followed. It explores the escalation from Gaza to direct Iran-Israel confrontation, the involvement of proxy groups and global powers, and the 2025 '12 Day War'. Through sharp analysis and vivid narration, it captures the conflict's human and strategic costs, its impact on regional geopolitics, and why lasting peace remains elusive.

Author: Col Rajeev Agarwal

ISBN : 9788199772892 | Price : ₹ 995

Trumpotopia : A Guidebook to Decode Donald Trump, and the Culture and Politics of America with Tips for World Leaders to Tackle Trumpotopia

| Ice Bucket Publishing, 2025



Trumpotopia explores the personality, politics, and vision of Donald J. Trump while examining America's changing political and cultural landscape. As the US celebrates the 250th anniversary, the author presents the country as a political "boxing ring" between MAGA and its liberal-left counterforce, KAGA. The book traces the evolution of American political parties, the rise of "Donfather" culture, and the potential impact of a Trump-led crypto revolution. Beyond analysis, it offers practical strategic tools for leaders, diplomats, CEOs, and interest groups seeking to navigate the complexities of a Trumpotopian America.

Author: Robinder Sachdev

ISBN : 9789334102499 | Price : ₹ 2350