

## Book Review

**Hussain Bukhari, Syed Shahid, *Pakistan's Security and the India-US Strategic Partnership: Nuclear Politics and Security Competition***

New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 264.

The global nuclear debates started focusing on South Asian regional politics with the prevalence of nuclear shadows on the decades-long India-Pakistan rivalry. The leading academic circles of the international strategic community diverted their attention towards the South Asian nuclear order while developing their varying levels of analysis on the India-Pakistan strategic competition. Apart from fluctuating viewpoints of the international community, the Indian and Pakistani academic circles preferred to maintain their contesting positions on the South Asian regional nuclear order. In the existing literature on the India-Pakistan nuclear arms race, very few authors tried to address the question of strategic equilibrium in the nuclearised subcontinent. The book under review attempts to analyse the role of extra-regional interventions in fracturing the regional strategic balance in South Asia, which is mainly dependent on the India-Pakistan arms race. The unstoppable and irreversible arms competition between New Delhi and Islamabad is the central theme of the book. The study attempts to trace the worst impacts of foreign interventions on the regional stability of the nuclearised subcontinent. Bukhari, an emerging figure of the Pakistani strategic community, talks about the role of extra-regional powers in intensifying the regional security environment of South Asia, which revolves around the evolving strategic postures of New Delhi and Islamabad. He develops his views on the scope of regional stability, which is directly linked to the India-US strategic partnership and its impacts on Pakistan's strategic calculations.

The book is divided into ten brief chapters. The writer starts off the debate with an undeniable interconnection between South Asian regional politics and global power politics. The involvement of extra-regional power shapes the regional strategic behaviours of New Delhi and Islamabad. The overwhelming impacts of great power politics impact the

regional strategic competition between India and Pakistan, parallel to intensifying the security dilemma between both contestants. Apart from formally introducing the main idea of the book in the introductory pages, the subsequent chapters continue the debate on the nature of India-US strategic bilateralism and its relevance to Pakistan's security. The theoretical framework provided in the second chapter explains the conceptual understanding of the India-Pakistan nuclear competition in the presence of extra-regional players. In addition to the Balance of Power theory, the Power Transition theory also presents the theoretical description of India-Pakistan conflicted relations. The genesis of decades-long rivalry between the pair of nuclear states can be traced to the post-independence period under the shadows of the Cold War politics when the communist-capitalist expansionist policies placed South Asia under their contesting alliance systems. The third chapter covers the history of the India-Pakistan conflict with reference to the global power politics where South Asia was encircled by three great powers: China, the US, and the Soviet Union. The disappearance of the Soviet Union from the international system and the formulation of a Soviet-less world politics resulted in a close Indo-US bilateral collaboration. The signing of the Next Step in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) between Vajpayee and Bush governments revolutionised the bilateral cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters attempt to analyse the evolution of Indo-US strategic bilateralism from different angles whereas the seventh chapter provides a comprehensive account of India-Pakistan strategic competition. The interesting part of the book comes in the eighth and ninth chapters, which highlight the impacts of an inter-state interaction between India and the US vis-à-vis Pakistan. The arguments in both chapters attempt to convey the inseparable and undeniable relevance of Pakistan's security to the growing strategic closeness between Washington and New Delhi because the multidimensional strategic support of the US to India is leaving negative impacts on Pakistan's position in its home region. Moreover, the diversification of cooperative strategic ties of both states ignores the scope of peace and stability in South Asia.

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Therefore, the book is a fascinating account of the South Asian strategic contest between the pair of nuclear states and the unprecedented growth of their perpetual conflict under global power politics. The Indian inclusion in the greater American geostrategic priorities is fundamentally designed to counter the economic rise of China, which is purely a matter of great power politics without seriously considering the impacts of Washington and its India-centric South Asian policy on the regional strategic equilibrium of the nuclearized subcontinent. While keeping in mind Pakistan's growing security concerns in the presence of the evolving multi-layered India-US collaboration in the field of security and defence, this book contains an exceptional interpretation of American South Asian policy, which is persistently inflicting a sense of insecurity in Pakistan. Based on the book's central theme, it is appropriate to maintain that Bukhari's way of analysing the India-Pakistan strategic contest is an appreciable addition to the existing literature on the complex South Asian security environment. Bukhari's conceptually convincing and rationally impartial arguments make this book an appropriate study for both students and academics interested in evaluating an unprecedented growth of South Asian regional politics under the influences of great power politics.

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