

EXAMINING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC THINKING

Performer: The Stimson Center

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ABSTRACT:

The Stimson Center South Asia Program proposes a multistage project to be led by Dr. Sameer Lalwani involving new data collection on Pakistan's strategic literature, mixed-method content analysis of this literature, and publication of a monograph.

Pakistan poses a critical challenge to U.S. national security interests. Pakistan's nuclear weapons, rate of vertical proliferation, perpetual instability, history of risky decision-making, and a checkered record with terrorist organizations elicit grave concerns. The past year has witnessed a disquieting uptick in cross-border terrorism, strategic arms racing, and nuclear-tinged crises. These hazards demand U.S. foreign policy attention while Pakistan's geopolitical position within Asia and the Muslim world affords opportunities for U.S. national security interests. Managing these risks while capitalizing on opportunities requires a strong understanding of Pakistani strategic thinking.

There is a fundamental gap in our understanding of Pakistani strategic thought, especially on nuclear issues. Traditional analysis has proved insufficient. A better understanding of Pakistan's behavior, strategic calculations, and evolution as a nuclear weapons state requires new data and novel methods to interpret it. A systematic study of seven decades of Pakistani strategic literature on nuclear issues can help fill this void and shed light on preferences, priorities, perceptions, risk propensity, and learning when it comes to proliferation, deterrence, and strategic stability.

Without understanding Pakistan's strategic worldview, U.S. policymakers and scholars will struggle to anticipate or respond to Pakistan's future behavior. Productive U.S. engagement requires knowledge of how Pakistan perceives threats, conceptualizes deterrence, prioritizes objectives, evaluates doctrine, and anticipates consequences..

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information please contact INSS@usafa.edu.