

INDUCTION OF MOAB AND FOAB IN THE MODERN BATTLEFIELD AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MILITARY STRATEGIES OF UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA

Tauqeer Hussain Sargana¹ & Mujahid Hussain²

Abstract

This article takes the context of American MOAB or “Mother of All Bombs” with that of Russian FOAB or “Father of All Bombs” as variable of a shift in the conventional military strategies of both the states. The two traditional rivals are staging a new battlefield emerged out of 21st century non-kinetic security anxieties. The traditional security anxiety faced by both states during the Cold War was addressed amicably through parity of military preparedness. This parity is breached in the 21st century non-kinetic environment that gives space to the application of non-state actors as credible proxies while dramatically changing the battlefield maneuvers. It transformed the strategic thinking of both the states and shifted their conventional military strategies. To investigate the dynamics of MOAB and FOAB in reference to conventional military thinking, this research follows the inductive approach. The primary outlook of the analysis is supported by the existing portfolio of non-nuclear conventional weaponry with the application of the mixed method approach.

Key words: military, strategy, MOAB, FOAB, conventional, nuclear, US, Russia.

INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, the fundamental objective of the United States (US) foreign policy was based on the Truman Doctrine, which was to contain Communism. This kept the US military strategy and foreign policy purely focused on Soviet military preparedness and foreign policy postulations. In the aftermath of Soviet disintegration, the global political order saw drastic changes and gave impetus to western geo-economics as envisioned by Francis Fukuyama under “End of History” (Fukuyama, 2006) but also clutched the security anxiety of the US with fear of reemergence of new poles of civilizational confrontations as propagated by Samuel P. Huntington in “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington, 1996). Therefore, clandestine but continuous confrontation with its sole competitor Russia with that of the larger faction of anti-Americanism came into existence as a byproduct of post-Cold War non-traditional and over-stretched embryonic functioning of the new world order. Furthermore, the factor of non-state actors, both as an engine of economic growth and challenge to world peace emerged out of unaddressed fault lines. The fault lines of the Cold War were clustered under bi-polar competition, but the new phenomenon of non-state actors emerged under a loose political orchestration. Military means to address the fault lines somehow remained relevant among the custodians of global power.

With the passage of time, the so-called faction of anti-Americanism has coined the global forces together who have been the victim of US military, intelligence, economic and political interventions. Today, the Washington establishment that includes both the Pentagon and CIA believes that

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad. Email: tauqeer.hussain@iiu.edu.pk

² Senior Lecturer, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University Islamabad. Email: mhussain.buic@bahria.edu.pk

Russians have managed to exploit the global faction of anti-Americanism and sooner or later the overstretched and extended US foreign policy would bow its head to her former ideological enemy (Sokolsky, 2017). The IR literature then in real terms would conclude the ideological confrontation between the two rivals, which emerged in the aftermath of WWII. The possible conclusion of the tussle in favor of Russia with increased influence in regions classified under US strategic depths causes the real anxiety to Washington.

SHIFT IN THE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY STRATEGIES

The use of non-nuclear conventional weaponry like MOAB by the Washington is an anxiety to evolving Russian military and intelligence warfare (Covington, 2016). This study premises that the way the US unveiled its nuclear weapons during WWII in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to establish its writ, the same very way it used its non-nuclear conventional weapon MOAB in Afghanistan to reshape the military environment. Moreover, the fear of non-state actors on territories called strategic depths has ultimately inducted the massive non-nuclear conventional weaponry on the battlefield. Below, an effort is made to provide a comparative outlook of MOAB with that of the Father of All Bombs (FOAB) developed by Russia to better understand the non-nuclear conventional capability of both rivals.

What is MOAB?

When it comes to unleashing a non-nuclear strategic arsenals the “Mother of All Bombs” that is also referred to as MOAB is one of the most destructive and powerful weapons in possession of the US. The military name of it is “GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast” (“MOAB strike felt like,” 2017). The basic purpose of the bomb is to penetrate deep into the terrain camouflaged with 200 feet concrete around hidden caves and bunkers. That is why the bomb is called “bunker-buster” (Greenemeir, 2017). Developed during Iraq War in 2003, the bomb for the first time was used on April 13, 2017, in Afghanistan’s Nangarhar Province against the ISIS terrorist outfit hiding in the caves of the Achin district (Rasmussen, 2017). This was the first time a MOAB has been used on the battlefield. Weighing up to 21,000 pounds, the MOAB is considered as “the most fearsome explosive weapon in the Pentagon’s possession” (“What is MOAB,” 2017). Contrary to MOAB, Dr. Martin Navias of the Centre for Defence Studies at King’s College London claimed in a radio interview that the U.S. has developed a bigger and more powerful non-nuclear weapon that it would potentially use against the North Korean leadership (“Bunker Buster even bigger,” 2017). In this loop of non-nuclear conventional weapons, Moscow has also registered its mightiest non-nuclear conventional arsenals. The Russian version of the MOAB is nicknamed as the “Father of All Bombs” or FOAB which is a “bomber-delivered thermobaric weapon” (The News, 2017).

It is believed that the MOAB destroys everything within the area of 1000 yards, whereas within one mile area the impact brings catastrophic damage to human life including buildings and moving things. Human or material suffering does not stop here as up to 1.7 miles the impact of its shock waves could easily kill people and off-road trucks, equipment, tanks along with bringing massive damage to the constructions. Between 2 to 5 miles radius people could become deaf, windows are broken and the ground shakes. The visibility of the mushroom cloud which goes up to 10,000 feet in

the air could be seen from a distance of 30 miles from the epicenter (Cooper & Mashal, 2017). Some of the features of MOAB are listed below:

- Each MOAB costs around US \$16 million (Beaumont, 2017).
- So far the US has 20 such weapons and the military has spent almost \$314 million on the production of the explosive (Abrams, 2017).
- The original goal of building the MOAB was to act as a non-nuclear deterrent against former Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein (Smith, 2017).
- When MOAB was developed in 2003, it was considered the most powerful non-nuclear conventional weapon in possession of any military in the world. Though, this fact was challenged in 2007 when Russia claimed to possess four times more powerful bomb FOAB (Mosher, 2017). Expanding the loop of destruction, Iran in September 2017 also claimed to possess a 10-tons bunker-buster bomb in its inventory (Press TV, 2017).

The MOAB is not the only bunker-buster non-nuclear strategic weapon that the U.S. military is right now equipped with. There are few other powerful non-nuclear conventional weapons that the US military possesses such as “GBU-57A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrator” which is a 30,000lb weapon (Clements, 2012). But the weapon is not that powerful as MOAB or Russian FOAB are said to believe. GBU-43 MOAB was designed to destroy underground facilities, caves, and tunnels. As mentioned earlier, the US had developed the GPS-guided bomb for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but the induction of the weapon on the battlefield came to surface on April 13, 2017. Just like the Russian bomb, the 30-foot MOAB detonates before hitting the ground and causes unthinkable destruction by sending deadly shock waves up to a distance of over a mile in all directions. The GBU-43 MOAB, however, is not the heaviest conventional munitions in the American arsenal, which is why “GBU-57A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrator” takes the lead (Global Security, 2017).

FOAB: an answer to MOAB

It is assumed that in 2007 Russia developed FOAB as an answer to MOAB, which is four times superior conventional non-nuclear weapon with the capability to destroy the will of the opponent (Mosher, 2017). The FOAB as claimed by the Russian authorities is the most destructive weapon in possession of any modern military in the world. On the other side, Russian claims have raised eyebrows in the Pentagon establishment and most of U.S. defense analysts had questioned the power of FOAB (Sarkar, 2017). According to General Alexander Rushkin, the Russian Deputy Chief of Staff, who claimed that “the new bomb is smaller than the MOAB but much deadlier as the blast is twice as high when compared to MOAB” (Bloomfield, 2007). It is believed that in September 2017 Moscow also used the bomb in the Syrian battlefield against the ISIS commanders hiding in Deir ez-Zor that killed many senior ranks of the militant outfit (Tingle, 2017).

One could argue that the characteristics of FOAB might be grossly exaggerated by Moscow for publicity purposes, likely intended more to whip up domestic support for the Putin government than to intimidate the Americans. This could be true in case of maintaining the parity or at-least showing readiness to compete in the environment of changing the battlefield. The reality is that

FOAB is a weapon which parallels to MOAB had highlighted Moscow's willingness to deter non-state actors which in most of the strategic posturing will deeply inflict the command, control and communication brinkmanship of the proxies just like Americans have to outcaste the Daesh/ISIS in Afghanistan caves in 2018.

Impact of MOAB and FOAB on Political and Security Thinking

There are multiple shock waves that traveled out of battlefield induction of both MOAB and FOAB by the US and Russia, respectively. A few of them are mentioned below:

- One of the biggest shockwaves that emerged out of battlefield induction of both powerful bombs indicated the negation of the non-state actors being used to achieve kinetic means. This somehow gives an endorsement to the reality that non-state actors have been actively utilized as a means of modern warfare. Challenging the so-called writ of non-state actors while creating fear around the dropping of "bunker buster" bombs has without any doubt taken the militant leadership out of surprise. This study has already made a point that both Russia and the US have directly pointed fingers to each other to harbor terrorism through non-state actor phenomenon. When it comes to the Middle East and South Asia, the politics of great game had clandestinely used non-state actors to shape regional geography.
- The second shockwave is terribly dangerous as it brings catastrophic implications for the limited war scenario. Dropping the bomb to destroy close formations of opposing forces is a terribly horrific idea which in the case gives no option of survival in the battlefield once the weapon is dropped.
- The third shockwave highlights the advancement in the sophistication of non-nuclear conventional weapons with that of nuclear impact.
- Last but not least, the most important shock wave is political in nature that orchestrates greater instability and security anxiety among nations that had not adopted either cherished the path of the arms race. Practicing neutrality in the 21st century is almost impossible and for countries situated in or around troubled regions is almost facing infliction of modern warfare. Non-state actor utility has provided great leverage to powerful states against the weaker nations. The Middle East and South Asia are the two ideal geographical spots where proxies of non-state actors have created a mess.

Peter Bergen in his article written for the CNN highlighted that "there are perhaps secondary effects of MOAB bombing in Afghanistan such as signaling to the North Koreans and Syrians that the US can deploy such weapons against their bunker systems" (Bergin, 2017). The induction of MOAB in Afghanistan indicates the acceptance of limited war scenarios in future conflicts around the globe. This indirectly would allow the U.S. to lower the nuclear threshold and induction of non-strategic nuclear weapons such as tactical nuclear warheads as well as bombs like MOAB in the future battlefields. Induction of FOAB on the Syrian war theatre had also evolved unpredictable scenarios where "bunker buster" weapons seem an amicable solution to outcast the non-state actors. Furthermore, U.S. apprehensions regarding Russian military strategy to create a scenario of limited war in Eastern Europe has created manifold implications (Lanoszka, 2016). Unleashing the weapons of non-nuclear strategic bombs have complicated the battlefield scenarios with manifold impacts on conventional military strategy.

The most significant part of both MOAB and FOAB is the signaling that each has had for interested parties. For example, MOAB was dropped in Afghanistan on April 13, 2017, just six days before a peace conference was about to convene in Moscow to discuss issues faced by Kabul. Though ISIS tunnels were destroyed by MOAB, without any doubt representatives of Afghanistan along with twelve other nations did receive the strongest shockwaves. Moscow was the only capital that received the heat of it too. Complimenting to MOAB message, the US also regrets to attend the proposed peace conference of April 21, 2017 (Burrack; Bushy & Saifullah, 2017). Also in view of Joseph Trevithick who believes that the September 07, 2017 rumor of Russian FOAB that it dropped in Syria was a “message intended for another party [the US]... The massive Russian strike could be seen as a warning to any anti-regime forces interested in moving into the area...” (Trevithick, 2017). Interesting are the facts that both the US and Russia dropped their non-nuclear strategic weapons on Daesh; a non-state actor phenomenon which is again contested by regional leaders. For example, former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai in an interview with *Aljazeera* claimed that the US has secretly launched ISIS in the country and dropping of MOAB in April 2017 was an excuse (“Hamid Karzai: US colluded,” 2017). Moreover, Russia has been skeptical of the US dual role in Syria that Moscow claims as “irrefutable evidence” of American support for ISIS (Walker, 2017).

The argument could surface which highlights the development of the MOAB and FOAB as being extremely significant to the politics of the US-Russia relations, and similar weapons as being key to great power politics in general. Even if the US and Russia were “muscle-flexing” a bit by using these weapons in Afghanistan and Syria, why should anyone believe that these actions are particularly significant? The associated reference to such argument could be, after all, neither Washington nor Moscow seems obsessed with these weapons, having built only small numbers of them. Moreover, the MOAB is really only useful when its possessor possesses absolute control over the airspace—it is delivered by slow-moving cargo aircraft that are extremely vulnerable to enemy aircraft.

The response to the above argument, this article had maintained a claim of changing battlefield, which is referred to as “modern battlefield” where non-state actors are the target rather sovereign states. US and Russia will be using non-state actors as a means of proxies to install perpetual instability in the regions of their choice. The major blowback of the instability will be directed to hamper the interests of Moscow by the Americans and reciprocally against Washington by the Moscow. Since the article claims that the future battlefield will be of an “indirect nature” so the response of war would also be indirect. This means that the flying aircrafts will not target the standing army of Russia or the US but their proxies which they don’t own. Using nuclear weapons against proxies organized through non-state actors would have complications and consequences under international law. As MOAB has already given quite successful results without complications posed by international law in Afghanistan against the so-called Daesh/ISIS faction, it’s continuous induction seems quite useful. So, when a “slow-moving cargo aircraft” is carrying a bunker-buster weapon in “airspace,” which both the US and Russia maintain “absolute control over” would not demand any official response or anti-ballistic missile defense installation. Therefore, this article has pointed out towards induction of MOAB and FOAB as a direct response to the “modern battlefield” and must be seen in context to deter proxy means of perpetual instability.

Other Nations in Possession of Bunker-Buster Weapons

There are few other states that have also acquired non-nuclear strategic weapons. Here is a quick look at some of these deadly air-delivered monster munitions whose efficiency and power almost match nuclear weapons and the smaller bombs that the air forces of India, China, France, Israel, South Korea, Iran, and Pakistan hold in their inventories:

Israel and South Korea: Israel and South Korean air forces are equipped with GBU-28 Hard Target Penetrator weapons which were provided by the U.S (Singh, 2017). These are bunker-buster weapons with munitions of 5,000-lb. The bombs were deployed by the USAF during Operation Desert Storm to carry out strikes against Iraqi bunkers, military installations and high-value strategic targets in 1991. The GBU-28, a variant of the “Paveway III bomb,” can reportedly blast through 100 feet of concrete (“The Israeli arsenal deployed,” 2009).

France: The French Air Force’s Rafale omni-role fighters can carry a number of bombs from the US Paveway family of munitions. The heaviest air-to-surface conventional weapon the fighter can be equipped with is the GBU-24 Paveway II, which is a 2,000-lb laser-guided bomb (Singh, 2017).

India: The Indian air force is currently in possession of Israeli made SPICE bombs being the biggest conventional bunker buster munitions in their custody. SPICE is an abbreviation of “smart precise impact and cost-effective,” which is a 200lb munitions bomb. The precision-guided weapons, keeping in view their size and yield could be used with Mirage 2000, Jaguar, and Sukhoi-30 fighter aircraft (Singh, 2017).

China: The Chinese Air Force has a variety of conventional bombs ranging in the 500 lb to 3,000-lb class. Most of these general-purpose bombs have been developed by China’s North Industries Corporation. Most of the designs are reportedly based on bombs earlier imported from Russia. Some of the designs also reportedly draw inspiration from the US Mk 80/82/83/84 bombs. Some other bombs in the Chinese inventory are also suspected to have been copied from Western designs (Singh, 2017).

Pakistan: The conventional bombs with Pakistan Air Force are in the 250 lb to 2,000-lb class, with the design again based on the US Mk 80 series bombs and mated to laser-guided systems of American origin. According to Defense Industry Daily, Pakistan has been in consultation with the U.S to buy some “1,600 Enhanced Paveway GBU-12 (500 lbs.) and GBU-24s (2,000 lbs.) with dual laser/GPS guidance; 800 MK-82 500 pound General Purpose (GP) and MK-84 2,000 pound GP bombs; and 700 BLU-109 2,000 pound bunker-buster bombs with the FMU-143 Fuse (“Billions to Upgrade,” 2017). Former IAF vice Chief Air Marshal KK Nohwar also claimed that (as quoted by Rahul Singh) “India, China and Pakistan largely have a similar stockpile of lighter non-nuclear bombs. It’s nowhere close to the mega bombs that the Russians and the Americans can deploy in combat” (Singh, 2017).

Iran: Iran also in 2017 claimed that they have developed about 10,000-lb bunker-buster weapon to outcast American “Mother of All Bombs” (Iran’s ‘father of all bombs,’” 2017). In an interview with Press TV Commander of the Iranian “Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)” Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh claimed that “Following a proposal by the Aerospace Force of the Islamic

Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), [Iran's] Defense Industries [Organization] manufactured a 10-ton bomb. These bombs are at our disposal. They can be launched from Ilyushin aircraft and they are highly destructive" (Press TV, 2017). General Hajizadeh also pointed out his fingers on the dual use of the U.S. in Syria and Iraq, where Washington's behavior is in favor of Deash rather than a threat to militant organizations. He specifically said that "We have documents showing the behavior of the Americans in Iraq and Syria. We know what the Americans did there; what they neglected and how they supported Daesh" (Press TV, 2017).

Impact of Bunker-Buster Weapons on Military Strategy

The above discussion of the inventory of non-nuclear strategic weapons indicates the dynamics of the future battlefields with potential bidders. The use of bunker-buster weapons in a battlefield is not an old concept as it had been already made part of military strategy during the Cold War. The US used BLU-82 bunker-buster weapons during the Vietnam War to level the thick forests for helicopter landings (Norton-Taylor, 2001). The main purpose of the weapon's use was to destroy enemy formations along with its brinkmanship. The weapons were never inducted in isolation as they were non-nuclear conventional choice preferred over declared nuclear doctrine. In the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing, the use of nuclear weapons remained a halted choice mainly due to the factor of "mutual assured destruction." This as a result qualified deterrence in all scenarios of political turmoil. Therefore, under the strategic nuclear threshold space for sub-conventional warfare was created which was observed both in the Vietnam War of the 1960's and Afghanistan War of the 1980's.

Due to increased nuclear threshold, the application of indirect strategy got impetus and gave birth to non-state actors. Under this phenomenon, initially, guerilla militias and proxies served the interests of great powers but later created their own space. This gave birth to terrorist outfits and militant organizations with regional cum global aspirations inflicting the very stability of international politics. Somehow, in between the ambiguous lines, powerful states have also created their own outfits which under the bigger umbrella of instability have successfully waged wars. Indian application of state terrorism through Afghanistan to support the insurgency and terrorism in Pakistan is not a new phenomenon. This was even reiterated by the former U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel, who was also nominated by President Obama for Secretary of Defense. While speaking in Washington, he said that "India has over the years financed problems for Pakistan on that side of the border, and you can carry that into many dimensions" ("India Finances Trouble," 2013). Afghanistan's battlefield particularly, along with Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, have clearly defeated the military strategy of direct warfare in front of non-state actor's indirect warfare.

In this backdrop, the battlefield had become more complex. All modern militaries have been trained in traditional warfare along with weapons they developed were meant to fight a standing army. After the advent of nuclear weapons, the space for direct warfare decreased and guerilla cum proxy warfare filled the gap. In the post-Cold War, particularly post 9/11 episode had crafted a blurred battlefield where the amalgamation of "state sponsored non-state actors" have created 5th generation warfare, which is non-kinetic and hybrid in nature. The 21st century modern warfare has almost covered every single aspect of conflict including space and cyber. The socio-political

elements that are traditionally considered as the “elements of national power” have been challenged by the non-state actors who are creating their own “shadow elements.” These “shadow elements” are fed through socio-political fault lines within the state. Strong and powerful states also exploit “shadow elements” to target “elements of national power” of the state they are interested to bring instability. Hybrid warfare is a classic example which through social media created the “Arab Spring” in the Middle East and overthrew many regimes in a short span of time.

Creating and exploiting “shadow elements” is quite a challenge in a nation which has strong “elements of national power.” In such a scenario, the application of indirect strategy requires equal and deliberative execution of direct strategy. For example, in South Asia, Pakistan is a victim of Indian conventional military strategy which is vested to challenge the national integrity of Pakistan. India in 1948 through its military mobilization occupied Kashmir and in 1965 fought a full-fledged war. Remaining unable to diminish the very existence of Pakistan, in 1971 it created a militia “Mukti Bahini” and fueled unrest in East Pakistan. Witnessing defeat of its militia India finally entered East Pakistan and waged a war. This was the execution of both indirect and direct military strategies by the Indians against Pakistan.

Pakistan to ensure its territorial integrity finally entered into the nuclear club, which was a reaction to Indian nuclear tests of May 11, 1998. Islamabad on May 28, 1998 decided to reciprocate the detonations. The irony of the fact is that Indian military adventurism is still active as under “Cold Start Doctrine” it wanted to create a space for “limited war” under a nuclear overhang. Pakistan denounced the possibility of limited war with India by developing its tactical nuclear weapon “NASR,” which is a short-range ballistic missile with a range of about 60 to 180 kilometers. Though, remained successful in 1971 but in the 21st century India's ambitions are high as the application of both direct and indirect military strategies against Pakistan is at its peak. From “Cold Start Doctrine” to “Line of Control” violations and from the mantra of “surgical strikes” to the sponsorship of proxies and terrorism through Afghanistan against Pakistan is an active military approach, which shows a clear manifestation of both direct and indirect military strategy.

Application of bunker-buster weapons in the South Asian context seems unlikely somehow and the very reason is close geographical proximity of the two nations. Dropping any sort of bomb on each other's soil would trigger the context of threshold which ultimately ends up as a total collapse of the brinkmanship. Though, usage of bunker-buster application could be seen as a credible option when two powerful opponents are fighting their war as a proxy. For example, Russia and the US have never fought a direct war, neither they would like to end up in such a situation. Though, they have been fighting indirect wars against each other. We have seen them fighting through proxies in Vietnam and Afghanistan. Today they are active in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, where the rulers of the collapsed nations are confronting non-state actors supported and sponsored by the great powers to outcast each other.

It is important to highlight that both Pakistan and India in most scenarios of bilateral conflict are followers of the Cold War, where Russia and the US while remaining under constant conflict learned to restrain. From total war to the sub-conventional war, both powers have ensured not to undermine the nuclear deterrence. This has given impetus to anxiety which indirectly had given

rise to the amalgamation of both direct and indirect military approaches. Moreover, the availability of nuclear weapons and the development of bunker-buster weapons to destroy the leadership of the “state sponsored non-state actors” has given rise to the possibility of “limited war” between Russia and the US. As both rivals are situated at a long distance, it is possible the “limited war” theatre would erupt in Europe and the Middle East. This could erupt separately or altogether as a reciprocal chain of reaction. So, it is important to understand what are the declared military strategies of both the US and Russia?

This question is adamant to understand how these weapons are going to impact on military strategies of both states. For example, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of the US had taken sharp shifts in its military strategy by inducting lowered-yield nuclear weapons on forward bases. This, in fact, came as a result of Russian undeclared massive development of non-strategic battlefield nuclear weapons such as tactical warheads. This Russian strategy is in fact considered by the US an attempt to install the limited war theater where Washington’s ability to respond is almost halted. Therefore, the US needs to parallel the mantra of lowered-yield tactical nuclear warheads. As a matter of fact, both the rivals have created a lowered threshold but still come under the dilemma of a nuclear catastrophe that erupts out of nuclear radiation. Bombs like MOAB and FOAB have fewer challenges as compared to radioactivity but expose massive destruction on the opponent. Under the prevailing global environment and multifaceted 5th generation warfare, the possibility of conflict is not out of the question though its intensity with the application of strategic nuclear weapons is minimized. This, in fact, allows the un-conventional mode of war that has added the non-state actors into the equation. The deterrence of such weapons vaporizes possibilities of non-state actors becoming stooges to great powers to be used as mercenaries fighting the war.

Today, the war is more ideological rather than an art of physical confrontation. Therefore, the presence of strategic nuclear, non-strategic nuclear and now non-nuclear conventional weaponry had almost put a full stop on military adventurism. The soft but deliberate means of global instruments such as economy, diplomacy, culture, knowledge, information, technology, politics, language, regional connectivity, and ability to explore these variables is the key to defeat the opponent. The conventional military strategies are no more relevant neither carrying the mantra of madness is a choice for military leaders. Non-kineticism is an ideal tool to defeat the opponent. Let’s not forget that how Russians have melded the American choice and brought Trump into the most powerful political office on earth and proved its might of maneuverability. Hence, due to the fear of “state sponsored non-state actors” jumping on territories called strategic depths has ultimately convinced the former rivals inducting massive non-nuclear conventional weaponry in the shape of MOAB and FOAB on the battlefield. As a consequence a new fear has erupted that has no limit and no known space, which is “might of maneuverability.” Therefore, the so-called military strategy is out of order and will remain so until states are able to deal with 5th generational warfare.

CONCLUSION

It was the induction of “Fat Man” and “Little Boy” by the US of America that decisively brought an end to WWII in 1945 and pushed the Japanese Emperor to the wall with no excuse to continue the war. The use of nuclear weapons abruptly ended the war, but also gradually brought a political

competition among the victors that lasted until the disintegration of the former Soviet Union (USSR). The Cold War was shaped more to maintain a status quo rather than breaking it.

Starting from the nuclear episode of WWII until the inclusion of MOAB, the US is the driving force of modern military strategy (Calamur, 2017). The induction of nuclear weapons during the 20th century brought a new era of political confrontation between the former USSR and the US. In-fact, nuclear weapons unleashed the Cold War not only as of the political confrontation between the two powerful states of the 20th century but also as an ideological rift that divided the world into two blocks. The disintegration of the USSR did conclude the status quo of the Cold War period but failed to accumulate the ideological differences between the two biggest rivals. The post-Cold War period was seen as another victory mostly by the Americans who envisioned and dreamt of a new world. As a matter of fact, the post-Cold War period brought much more complexity for the Americans and most of its foreign policy was exposed in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the famous World Trade Centers in New York. The post 9/11 US reaction not only overstretched its military muscles but also introduced aggression in its foreign policy.

The induction of MOAB in the US conventional military strategy initiated the birth of a new era of military confrontation between the traditional Cold War competitors. For kinetic interests, the non-kinetic means would become the sole source of military execution. The definition of non-kinetic sources is dependent on the capacity, capability, and political interests of the states. The rough explanation would include cyber warfare, use of electronic, print, and social media, implantation of likeminded political generation, dedicated funding to control the national narratives through a community of intelligentsia and researchers, exploitation of the elements of national resilience, focused and deliberate investment in the neighborhood to isolate the opponent, and raising an army of non-state actors as wild cards to compel political events in favor of the driving force.

Non-state actors (intelligence-based covert operations and their extended army of non-state actors) would play a key role in achieving traditional and non-traditional objectives of states in the 21st century. There are only seven states in the World who have the capacity, capability, and strong political interests to fully operationalize the non-kinetic aspects of modern military strategy. Among them at the top are the US, Russia, China, Israel, India, Iran, and Pakistan.

The above seven players will not work in isolation rather they are likely to join the greater faction of non-kinetic warfare. It seems that the US would frame an alliance with Israel, whereas; Russia will go with Iran. China and Pakistan would most probably form an alliance of economic integration to stay neutral and do their best to attract India to join their group. India is the wild card for the US to engage both China and Pakistan into the equation of non-kinetic warfare. In other words, both China and Pakistan are dependent on the Indian decision. If nonaligned then neutrality prevails in the region and if forms an alliance then orchestration of terror would be unleashed in the region. As a matter of fact, Indian intensions to join such an alliance are no more secret. Capturing of Indian RAW agent Kalbushan Yadeve and death of its 13 agents with ISIS militants that were killed after the MOAB attack in Afghanistan is very much indicative of her active participation in the orchestration of terror (Ahuja & Laskar, 2017).

The ever-changing nature of warfare with that of military strategy had shaped the very complexity of the modern battlefield. Who is who in the matrix of conflict is not an easy job for most of the nations confronted with changing dynamics of warfare. From massive military modernizations to induction of multi-level weaponry, the future of military strategy seems under transformation. Therefore, states with intense security environment have finally decided to rely on an amalgamation of both conventional and non-conventional approaches to tackle the conflictual scenarios. Hence, the role of MOAB and FOAB weapons will play a decisive role in modern battlefields under enhanced application of “state sponsored non-state actors.”

REFERENCES

- Abrams, A. (2017, April 13). The U.S. just dropped the “mother of all bombs” in Afghanistan. But what is that? *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4739302/mother-of-all-bombs-afghanistan-what-is-that/>
- Ahuja, R., & Laskar, R. (2017, April 18). 13 Suspected Indian IS fighters killed as MOAB Hit Afghanistan: Reports. *Hindustan Times*.
- Beaumont, P. (2017, April 14). MOAB attack on ISIS was a baffling choice in cold-blooded terms of cost. *The Guardian*.
- Bergin, P. (2017, April 14). Why the “mother of all bombs” and why now? *CNN*.
- Billions to upgrade and up-arm Pakistan’s f-16s. (2017, January 17). *Defense Industry Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/51b-proposed-in-sales-upgrades-weapons-for-pakistans-f16s-02396/>
- Bloomfield, A. (2007, September 12). Russian army tests “the father of all bombs.” *Telegraph*.
- Bunker buster even bigger than MOAB. (2017, April 14). *BBC News*.
- Burrack, C., Bushuev, M., & Saifullah, M. (2017, April 04). US skips out on Afghanistan-Taliban conference in Moscow. *DW*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/us-skips-out-on-afghanistan-taliban-conference-in-moscow/a-38426486>
- Calamur, K. (2017, April 13). Why did the U.S. use the “mother of all bombs” in Afghanistan? *The Atlantic*.
- Clements, R. (2012, February 12). USAF to get upgraded bunker buster (while developing new tactics to reach buried nuke sites). *The Aviationist*. Retrieved from <https://theaviationist.com/2012/02/12/mop/>
- Cooper, H., & Mashal, M. (2017, April 13). U.S. drops “mother of all bombs” on ISIS caves in Afghanistan. *New York Times*.
- Covington, S. R. (2016, October). *The culture of strategic thought behind Russia’s modern approaches to warfare* (Paper). Retrieved from HARVARD Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs website: <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/culture-strategic-thought-behind-russias-modern-approaches-warfare>
- Fukuyama, F. (2006). *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Global Security. (2017). GBU-57/B massive ordnance penetrator (MOP). Retrieved from <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/mop-program.htm>
- Greenemeir, L. (2017, April 13). What is the “mother of all bombs” that the U.S. just dropped on Afghanistan?. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-is-the-mother-of-all-bombs-that-the-u-s-just-dropped-on-afghanistan/>
- Hamid Karzai: US colluded with ISIL in Afghanistan. (2017, November 11). *Aljazeera*.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of World order*. New York: Touchstone.
- India finances trouble in Pakistan: Hagel. (February 27, 2013). *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/788984>
- Iran's "father of all bombs" dwarfs US biggest non-nuclear bomb: Commander. (2017, September 16). *Press TV*. Retrieved from <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/09/16/535305/Iran-bomb-IRGC-US-MOAB>
- Lanoszka, A. (2016). Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in Eastern Europe. *International Affairs*, 92(1), 175-195.
- MOAB strike felt like "doomsday," Afghan villagers say. (2017, April 14). *BBC News*.
- Mosher, D. (2017, April 15). Russia's "father of all bombs" is 4 times stronger than the "mother of all bombs" for a horrifying reason. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/foab-vs-moab-bomb-damage-2017-4>
- Norton-Taylor, R. (2001, November 07). Taliban hit by bombs used in Vietnam. *The Guardian*.
- Rasmussen, S. E. (2017, April 15). US "mother of all bombs" killed 92 ISIS militants, say Afghan officials. *The Guardian*.
- Sarkar, I. (2017, April 14). Russia's father of all bombs is mightier than United States' mother of all bombs. *NDTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russias-father-of-all-bombs-is-mightier-than-uss-mother-of-all-bombs-1681207>
- Singh, R. (2017, April 14). World's biggest bombs: India's SPICE no match for America's MOAB or Russian FOAB. *Hindustan Times*.
- Smith, A. (2017, April 14). Why America dropped "mother of all bombs" on ISIS in Afghanistan. *ABC News*.
- Sokolsky, R. (2017, March 13). *The new NATO-Russia military balance: Implications for European security*. Retrieved from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/13/new-nato-russia-military-balance-implications-for-european-security-pub-68222>
- The Israeli arsenal deployed against Gaza during operation cast lead. (2009, Spring). *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 38(3). 175-91.
- Tingle, R. (2017, September 9). Did Russia use the "father of all bombs" to kill senior ISIS commanders? Reports claim biggest ever non-nuclear bomb has been detonated near Syrian city of Deir ez-Zour. *Daily Mail*.
- Trevithick, J. (2017, September 07). Rumors fly that Russia has dropped "the father of all bombs" in Syria. *The Drive*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/14175/rumors-fly-that-russia-has-dropped-the-father-of-all-bombs-in-syria>
- Walker, S. (2017, November 14). Russia's "irrefutable evidence" of US help for ISIS appears to be video game still. *The Guardian*.
- What is MOAB, "mother of all bombs," and what is it capable of. (2017, April 14), *Haaretz*. Retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/what-is-moab-mother-of-all-bombs-and-what-is-it-capable-of-1.5460852>