Emerging Technologies and Regional Stability

The February 2019 India-Pakistan crisis revealed to the world how advanced technologies can shape the onset, dynamics, and outcomes of conflict between major powers. The region may be just starting to encounter the impact of the military-technical revolution on regional stability that involves capabilities with enhanced speed, precision, standoff, electronic detection, jamming, and real-time data fusion for network-centric military operations, alongside (dis)information technologies to create orthogonal understandings of reality between warring parties.

And still, this may be just the beginning. Scholars are paying increasing attention to a new wave of emerging technologies that might substantially disrupt strategic stability in peacetime, crisis, and war. Emerging technologies such as cyber, autonomous weapons, artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing, stealth, synthetic biology, hypersonic vehicles, remote sensing, and distributed ledger technology are all poised to reshape the landscape of international relations (Sechser et al. 2019). The immediate fears of disruption and pessimism may not be warranted. Many technologies may not mature or live up to their hype, may not be developed or integrated in the region, or may bring conditional or countervailing effects that temper their impact.

This panel aims to probe how these technologies might affect regional stability in South Asia by exploring:

1. Whether they might be developed and integrated into strategic establishments (or resisted)?
2. How disparities in adoption timelines by regional states, including China could shape dynamics?
3. How they might affect the power balance between state and society (e.g. state and non-state actors)?
4. How they might make the region more or less stable?

The last question will consider several features including how technologies might: create new vulnerabilities that incentivise first mover advantage; reduce the space for decision times; enhance intentional and/or inadvertent escalation risks; enable or complicate communication of interests and resolve; and shape public opinion. The panel will further consider how these mechanisms might, more broadly, impact consequential features of interstate relations ranging from cooperation, coercion, crisis bargaining, arms racing, signaling, and the escalation and termination of conflict.

Reference
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