

Nuclear Security Dynamics in South Asia: India and Pakistan Nuclearisation and Its Implications*

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Abstract

Post-independence India and Pakistan have shared hostile relation with a number of wars and near-war situations. Through mutual hostility, war and war rhetoric have developed as their strategic cultures. India, the bigger power by many measures, and Pakistan, throughout their post-colonial-history(that extends to the present day) have faced a security dilemma, reinforcing each other's threat perception. Besides an arms race and 'alliance-counter alliance policy', both have embarked on nuclear programs to maintain the regional balance of power. While the US-Soviet Cold War experience established that 'nuclear weapon states do not fight with each other', India and Pakistan fought the Kargil War in 1999 in the immediate aftermath of nuclear tests. Today's security dilemma further increases as asymmetry develops through India's steady economic rise and military modernization. Therefore, this paper explores the security environment of South Asia and suggests that there are some stabilizing effects to nuclear weapons yet the triggers of conflict remain.

Key words: south asia, nuclear weapons, India, Pakistan, Kargil War.

I. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse the security implications of nuclearisation for ongoing regional stability in South Asia. Nuclear weapons have taken prominence in the strategic considerations of many countries following the end of World War II. The four decade long

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US-Soviet nuclear struggle realized a nuclear war can not be won and must never be fought. Ichho Itoh, Mayor of Nagasaki claimed[1] that the human race cannot co-exist with nuclear weapons. Itoh's claim reflected the hellish Japanese experience of 9 August 1945[2]. The end of Cold War to some degree removed the immediate nuclear fear. However, it did nothing to unravel the Asian conundrum. India and Pakistan, the two powerful next-door neighbours share a deeply entrenched enmity in their bilateral relations. The Indo-Pakistani acquisition of nuclear capability in the late 1990s brought to the fore, the continued nuclear danger. Both repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons in combat in contrast to the Cold War US-Soviet rivalry and this has ignited global debates on the role of nuclear weapons in Asian security.

The introduction of nuclear weapons with the backdrop of Indo-Pakistani animosity subsequently altered regional strategic environment, making South Asia one of the most dangerous places on earth. Home to over one-fifth of the world's population including the largest portion of the world's poor, the Indian sub-continent has long been in a vicious circle of conflict. In recent years, the sustained economic growth of India, and Pakistan's pivotal role in the US led War on Terror have made the Asian security framework a subset of the global security complex.

The regional antagonists share a war-ridden past; however since 1971, there has not been state-on-state war between the two[3]. In this sense, Indo-Pakistani relations have improved. Both have displayed restrained conflict behaviour in crises both before and after May 1998 nuclear tests. Superficially, activity appears to show a thawing in relations; however deeper analysis of the situation is not so optimistic. 14 years since nuclearisation, the triggers of conflict between them still remain. War rhetoric continually threatens the security and stability of the region. Ganguly and Kapur acknowledging the criticality of Indo-Pakistani relations assert: Such a violent relationship, when combined with nuclear weapons, could prove to be a combustible mix[4].

As many had believed, the existence of nuclear weapons couldn't ensure security and stability in the region. Confirmation is found in wider analysis of the Kargil War 1998 and the 2001-02 crises. Arguably there was relative peace during their covert nuclearisation until late 1990s which was marred by a number of conflicts. The scale of attacks that terrorists have become able to mount(evident since 9/11) and the concern that Pakistan could be a hub of international proliferation has only compounded the Asian security environment. However, the security-insecurity complex became more puzzling when series of Pakistan-backed militant attacks in India did not end in full-scale war as had previously been the case.

The security dilemma in South Asia is developing further. India's sustained economic growth and its strategic considerations would augment its military modernization; thereby further increasing Indo-Pakistani asymmetry in favour of India. Thus, Pakistan is more

reliant its nuclear deterrent in order to maintain the regional balance of power.

South Asia as a region is a recent phenomenon and its definition varies. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation(SAARC) includes eight member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. The United Nations Population Information Network(POPIN) includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as part of South Asia. South Asian Studies Programs in University of California, Michigan, and Virginia amongst others have included different countries as South Asia. For clarity in this paper, South Asia includes the eight SAARC members.

Given the regional security complex and evolving definitions of security, it is difficult to establish what exactly security and stability in the region would mean. Primarily, this paper will consider the military security aspect to gauge the stability in the region. The term 'security and stability' will be used to define the state of relationship between India and Pakistan[3].

The paper is divided in two main sections: the first section will appraise the South Asian security perspectives, while the second section will assess the implications of nuclear weapons on security and stability in the region. Following a brief introduction of the historical rivalry between India and Pakistan, it will evaluate the security situation spanning from the 1980s through to 2013. In doing so, the evolving strategic context will be put into perspective and nuclear weapons will be central within the wider thesis of nuclear deterrence and the associated dilemmas. The conclusion will postulate the future of nuclear South Asia.

II. The history of rivalry and an evolving strategic environment

Since partition, Indo-Pakistani relations have been shaped by three key factors: a religious dimension, internal political dynamics of both countries and the influences of external actors on their behaviour. Although the Hindu-Muslim conflict was not a twentieth century phenomenon in the South Asian history, and the episodes of communal violence leading up to the independence in August 1947 resulted in the cross border migration of about fifteen million people and the killings of approximately 500,000 Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs[5]. This bloody process of partition embedded in their common historical legacy exerts a persistent negative influence on their relations. As a result, mutual mistrust threatens the regional security and stability that has become dependent on the development of internal and external political dynamics in both India and Pakistan.

The roots of the South Asian security situation can be traced back through history. Over

the last six decades there were four military conflicts in South Asia: fought between India and Pakistan in 1948, 1965, 1971 and a low intensity conflict in 1998(Kargil War). In addition, China and India fought in 1962 over border disputes. With this backdrop, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute analysis shows:

War, disputes over territories and borders, cross border involvement, and access to nuclear - all point to the fact that South Asia could become a major flash point where the actors resort to the use of weapons of mass destruction in case of war or conflict[6].

The process of post-colonial state building and nation building was problematic in both the countries as they sought to establish national identities while facing internal turmoil: extremely segmented societies, divided by language, religious affiliation, class, tribe, and caste. Therefore history can be said to have made the Indo-Pakistani relationship fundamentally problematic. Benazir Bhutto's view speaks volumes, "It's our history. ...three wars with a larger neighbour. ...five times larger in military strength. In 1971, our country was disintegrated[3]." Highlighting further, Hasnat explains that Pakistani national strategy will be "derived from the tensions and unresolved conflicts with India, emerging from the legacy of historic experience... compounded by hostile relations about each other[7]."

Today India is the largest democracy with a secular identity augmented by steady economic rise. India over the years consolidated its control over Kashmir, despite Pakistani wars, crises, insurgencies, proxies, terrorism and international pressure. For Pakistan, Kashmir is still central in Pakistan's national identity without which the partition remains incomplete. While India attaches Kashmir to its secular identity. Basrur's assessment underpins the criticality of Kashmir from the Pakistani perspective:

Pakistan's unremitting desire to wrest Kashmir has been repeatedly thwarted. Every stratagem - political alliance with the united States and China, multilateral pressure through the United Nations, the Islamic card via the Organization of Islamic Conference(OIC) and its individual members, war, proxy war - has failed to achieve the objective[8].

Basrur's argument that India is in practice(though not formally) content with the longstanding division of Kashmir, and Pakistan remains unhappy about Indian control of Kashmir[8]. Even the nuclear reality did not help Pakistan. It is evident from the past that Pakistan is more likely to go to war with India over Kashmir than India might be. As Pakistani identity remains indeterminate and while Pakistan is deeply engulfed in fighting religious extremism at home, the 'global war on terror' in Afghanistan also exerts international pressure on Pakistani leadership. The criticality attached to identity and its linkage with Kashmir are problematic in Indo-Pakistani relations continually threatens conflict.

Another significant aspect in Indo-Pakistani relations is the asymmetric power distribution in South Asia. Structurally India enjoys overwhelming superiority over Pakistan in all

dimensions: be it territory, population, economy, military power and GDP. Such an asymmetry historically has contributed to a complicated Pakistani security dilemma, consequently provoking dangerous Pakistani strategies towards India. Outlining six major dissimilarities between the Cold War and contemporary South Asia, Shaun Gregory argues that asymmetries will prevent contemporary South Asia from expecting the Cold War prescriptions for strategic stability to play.

Arguably, control over Kashmir was primary cause in past conflicts. Partition[in 1947] left a legacy of animosity between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan fought over the control over Kashmir in 1947-48 and in 1965. The third war dismembered the Pakistani state in 1971, while the Kargil War 1999 ended in a stalemate. The consequences of these only serve the intractability of the conflict. Therefore the territorial contention over Kashmir continues to constitute a danger of another war between the two[9].

The 1947 war left India and Pakistan with possession of two-thirds and one-third of Kashmir respectively. Despite wars(to alter the status quo in Kashmir), the Line of Control still holds. The second war over Kashmir in 1965 officially ended under the Soviet-brokered Tashkent Agreement. The 1971 war did not change the situation with Kashmir despite disintegration of Bangladesh. The legacy of this catastrophic defeat would underpin Pakistani strategic behaviour and greatly reduce Indian security dilemmas.

After 1971, India and Pakistan enjoyed relative stability in their bilateral relations despite number of near-war situations. Diplomatic ties were re-established under the 1972 Simla Agreement. However, Pakistani discontent was clearly seen through their embarkation into a nuclear program in the aftermath of major military defeat in 1971. In part this was also a consequence of India's ambitious nuclear program. Pakistan reportedly achieved de facto nuclear capability by the late 1980s. During this period, the Indo-Pakistani rivalry was marginalized because of non-nuclear considerations such as Pakistan's unfavourable military position. The covert nature of nuclearisation may also have played a part[9].

Despite uneasy relations, historical analysis of the past Indo-Pakistani conflicts demonstrates that changes in the strategic environment always had implications on their conflict behaviour. General illustrations are the past developments and the ongoing war on terror in Afghanistan. That said, it should be noted that a number of confidence building measures along with continued international pressure on both India and Pakistan have made the present security situation far better than it used to be. However, as variables of conflict remain in the region, the likelihood of the conflict has not yet eroded. Today both are developing their operational nuclear forces and the conventional arms race hasn't stopped either. Military conflagration with a background of historical animosity and developing religious extremism underscores the potential for escalation of a larger conflict.

III. Indo-Pakistani security in a nuclear perspective

The nuclear aspirations of India and Pakistan were not a 1990s evolution. The nuclear ambitions of India and Pakistan date back to the 1950s and 1960s respectively though they acquired a de jure nuclear capability in May 1998[10]. It is widely believed that by the late 1980s both had acquired a de facto nuclear capability. Therefore, Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationships can be accounted in two distinct periods: pre-1998 and post-1998 periods. The former period is characterized by a relatively peaceful relationship, while the latter again constituted two distinct periods: an immediate post-1998 period marred with two near-war situations and a period of much improved relations that continues to the present day.

In the mid-1980s while Pakistan was a frontline state in the US-backed Mujahedeen campaign against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, the Indian government was dealing with a secessionist movement for an independent 'Khalistan.' India claims that Pakistan took the advantage of the circumstance and supported insurgency in Punjab. Highlighting the Pakistani policy Ganguly asserts, Indeed it was India's growing frustrations with Pakistani involvement in the Punjab that in part, led India to embark on the Operation Brasstacks military exercise in 1987. In response, Pakistan also mobilized its armed forces on the frontiers; however, extensive diplomatic manoeuvring finally de-escalated the conflict.

The alleged Pakistani support to the Jammu and Kashmir insurgencies resulted in another military crisis between India and Pakistan, known as the '1990 Crisis'. During 1990 Crisis, Indian attempt to intimidate Pakistan and coerce it into ceasing its support for the Kashmir insurgency. The crisis kept alive the chance of war between the two with mobilization and counter mobilization along the Line of Control. The Pakistani military conducted its large Zarb-i-Momim military exercise in December 1989 and did not demobilize after the end of the exercise. India on the other hand deployed three Divisions into Kashmir and one Division in Punjab.

At the height of the tension approximately two hundred thousand Indian forces were fielded against roughly a hundred thousand troops across the Line of Control in Kashmir. Finally, American diplomatic manoeuvres, including that of US foreign Secretary 'Robert Gates mission', deescalated the crisis. For nuclear analysts the crisis holds importance because it was at this time that both were believed to have acquired incipient nuclear capability.

Many believed that Indo-Pakistani nuclear capability will bring about harmony and tranquillity in the subcontinent. However, Pakistani support to Kashmir insurgency continued even after 1990s. At the height of Pakistani support and in the wake of nuclear tests in May 1998, Pakistani intruders penetrated up to twelve kilometres into Indian Territory and occupied key heights on the Indian side of the LOC. Essentially, this ended

the longest period of tranquillity in the sub-continent since independence from Great Britain in 1947. The Indian military counter-attacked to maintain the sanctity of LOC and despite the possibility of the confrontation escalating into full-fledged war and the potential for nuclear war, the Indian counter offensive was largely restricted to the Indian side of the border. Ultimately, Pakistan withdrew following American pressure.

Kargil had been militarily and politically damaging to Pakistan. However, terrorist attacks in India possibly backed by Pakistan did not cease to exist. Examples being the hijacking of Indian Airlines aircraft in December 1999, terrorist attack on Jammu and Kashmir legislature on 1 October 2001, and attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. Consequently, India blamed Pakistan for backing the attackers and initiated Operation Parakram.

On the diplomatic fronts, India used American pressure on Pakistan. This resulted in the Pakistani President publicly denouncing terrorism, outlawing several Jihadist groups, arresting several members of terrorist groups, and pledging to prevent Pakistani territory from being used to foment terrorism in Kashmir. On top of that the diplomatic tour by US Secretary of State Colin Powell in January 2002 assured both India and Pakistan were working towards normalization of relations[11].

However with the killings of 32 people at the Indian Army camp at Kaluchak, Kashmir on May 14, 2002, the crisis re-erupted. War rhetoric on the Indian side indicated intent to strike Pakistan. At the height of tensions, another American diplomatic intervention forced Musharraf to promise a permanent end to infiltration. This brought an end to the Indian Operation Parakram and led to the subsequent withdrawal of forces to peacetime locations.

Since the 2001-02 crises, there have not been any major militarized crises between India and Pakistan. Indo-Pakistani relations have notably improved with a 'Composite Peace Dialogue' that started in 2004 in order to resolve the Kashmir dispute[12].

However, it should not be understood that the period since 2002 was tension-free. There were a significant number of terrorist activities in India supported by Pakistan. Notable examples include the 2005 Diwali bombing in Delhi, 2006 railway station bombing in Mumbai, and 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack. In all cases, terrorists were linked to Pakistan. However quite distinctively from their strategic culture, India did not initiate any provocative military measures like on similar previous occasions. Instead India embarked into a diplomatic campaign against Pakistan. Most significant of the terror attacks was the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, which could have easily taken them to full-fledged war. But India in response used its diplomatic tools to alienate Pakistan, and only discontinued 'composite dialogue.' India surprisingly chose to avoid war rhetoric despite tremendous popular pressure on the leadership to act. This was puzzling for many: Was this the result of existential nuclear deterrence or the result of Indian diplomatic, economic and strategic

calculations?

In-depth analysis of the post 2001-02 crisis suggests several strategic considerations as the reasons for improvement on Indo-Pakistani relations: first, since 2003 Pakistan became the most important non-NATO ally in the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan. In the words of the US president Barrack Obama, as outlined in his Afghan-Pak strategy(in 2010), the success in Afghanistan depends Pakistan's ability to quell support from Pakistani soil to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Second: India saw no diplomatic advantage in resorting to military response.

Confirming to the realist model, both India and Pakistan claimed the security imperatives of their nuclear tests. However, evidence illustrates more than merely the security motivations. Analysis of their path to May 1998 indicates the Indian and Pakistani nuclear desire to develop immediately after independence. India's first Atomic Energy Act was enacted in 1948(two years after that of the US) leading to the establishment of Indian Atomic Energy Commission. Later in the year 1954 Indian Department of Atomic Energy was established. Despite a nuclear test in 1974, the Indian Nuclear Program was claimed as peaceful until 1998. Ganguly argues that, India's crushing defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, China's 1964 nuclear test, Chinese threats to intervene in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, and the existing nuclear powers' refusal to grant a security guarantee ultimately led the India's adoption of the nuclear option. Similarly, Pakistani nuclear desire was seen in 1957 with the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission. The Pakistani nuclear program was basically driven by the stalemated 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, US refusal to supply arms to Pakistan, the crushing defeat to India in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, India's growing conventional superiority and Indian nuclear test in 1974.

India on their part has often cited the Chinese threat as the main rationale for their nuclear aspirations. Indian Defence Minister George Fernandez claimed that, China, not Pakistan was India's potential threat No. 1.[13] India signed in PTBT in 1963. Though India decided to remain non-nuclear during 1960s, the Congressional government decided to keep the nuclear option open in 1970s. India cited the Chinese threat being central in its decision not to be the party to CTBT in 1996. However, a notable improvement in conflict-ridden Sino-Indian relations in the 1990s did not such such Indian claims.

Furthermore it is also evident that, unresolved Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir was more likely to result in war than the Sino-Indian border dispute. Therefore, the realist security model does not fully satisfy India's decision to 'go nuclear'. Had this been the case, India would have tested nuclear weapons after the Chinese test of 1964 instead of waiting until May 1998. This proposition has further support from Frey who raised the following questions: why did India develop a nuclear-weapons-capable infrastructure before 1964 in the absence of any nuclear threat? Why did India wait 34 years before it responded to the

Chinese nuclear threat that emerged in 1964? Why did India develop the bomb first and only afterwards contemplate how to deploy it? Why did India accept the equalizing effects of nuclear weapons vis-à-vis Pakistan which, in doing so, voided much of its conventional superiority?[13] This suggests status and prestige models may be more convincing than the security model for their nuclear motivations.

For Pakistan, the Indian threat has always been primary in Pakistan's strategic thinking. Pakistan has a strong security rationale for openly 'going nuclear': to deter a conventional Indian attack and to achieve nuclear parity with India. Pakistan's nuclearisation process is clearly transformed out of India's nuclear program, and is fundamentally Indo-centric. Some significant events having a profound impact on Pakistan's perception of India's nuclear intentions: the assertion of Bhabha, the first chairman of Indian Atomic Energy Commission as India's reaction to a Chinese nuclear test in 1964 was that India could detonate a nuclear device in 18 months; India's commissioning of a Plutonium Reprocessing Plant in 1965; continuation of the US and Canadian assistance in Indian nuclear program despite Pakistani concerns. Chakma's further analysis of the Pakistani nuclear thinking suggests the 'India factor' as both the rationale and catalyst for openly going nuclear. The lack of American support to Pakistan in Indo-Pakistani War 1965, Indian refusal to sign a NPT in 1968, humiliating defeat in Bangladesh War in 1971, and Indian nuclear test in 1974 clearly incentivized Pakistani nuclear aspirations[14]. Here the realist security model largely amplifies President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's public statement, "If India developed an atomic bomb, we too [will] develop one even if we have to eat grass ... because there is no alternative to [the] atomic bomb[15]"

Another important explanation of Pakistani nuclear tests is what Carranza noted, "nuclearism is more pronounced in Pakistan than in India and nuclear movement is weaker in Pakistan than in India." [13] This also underpins the thesis that a nuclear weapon is a viable defence for weak state to ensure its security against strong states in the international system.

While China's primary threat perception stems from the United States role in the Asia Pacific region. Understandably, the Chinese security dilemma at the higher end will instigate South Asian security dilemma.

In reality, this poses a serious challenge in establishing stable deterrence in South Asia. On top of that the historical animosity between India and China and India and Pakistan, and the longstanding alliance between Pakistan and China reinforces the 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' analogy for China and Pakistan in the South Asian security framework. This adds to Indian security dilemma. On the other hand, this underscores significance of the 'China factor' in South Asian security.

The discussion above highlights the relative security implications of nuclear motivations

on the regional security dynamics in South Asia. Given the asymmetric Indian military superiority over Pakistan, Indian motivation is more of status and prestige than security (in the region), while Pakistan's motivation is solely based on Kenneth Waltz's military logic of self-help systems[3]. As noted above, Indian content and Pakistani discontent on the status quo of Kashmir suggests the possibility of Pakistan initiating war with India is more likely than vice versa. Therefore, the security and stability of the region depends on how Pakistan uses its nuclear arsenal, as India is less interested in becoming involved in conflict with Pakistan.

Pakistan declared the setting up of a National Command Authority(NCA) in February 2000 though it has not yet announced a formal nuclear doctrine. Thus far, Pakistan has pursued a policy of ambiguity in its nuclear strategy. Nuclear ambiguity could be a part of Pakistan's nuclear strategy as long as it serves their strategic objectives. As discerned from their policy and application, Pakistani nuclear policy has been consistent since the inception of nuclear weapons program in 1970s. It is clearly India-specific. Pakistan's nuclear doctrine seeks to deter both nuclear and conventional threats from India.

The fundamental tenet of Pakistani nuclear policy is to maintain and develop a credible nuclear deterrence. However, achieving this against India's nuclear build up and increasing conventional asymmetry poses the contradiction of a nuclear arms race.

India's first nuclear doctrine was released by India's first National Security Advisory Board(NSA) on 17 August 1999 as a Draft Nuclear Doctrine(DND). Later the Cabinet Committee on Security reviewed India's nuclear doctrine and set up the Indian National Command Authority(NCA) on 4 January 2003. The renewed DND represents India's formal nuclear doctrine which aspires to maintain and develop a 'credible minimum deterrent', and adopt 'no first use' nuclear posture.

The DND states that India will not resort to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against states which do not possess nuclear weapons, or are not aligned with nuclear weapon powers. Critics point out that such an ambiguity in 'no first-use policy' keeps the possibility of Indian nuclear use against any Pakistani aggression. The scope of Kargil War gave India a strategic position which evolved as a Pakistan specific Indian 'Cold Start Strategy'. Arguing that Indian nuclear doctrine retains the scope for conventional war-fighting Khursid Khan claims that the Indian aim to fight and win a conventional war with Pakistan exploiting the strategic space beneath the nuclear threshold, is highly risky, given the geographical contiguity[16].

IV. Implications of nuclear weapons on security and stability in South Asia

Arguably, war has transformed a strategic culture for both India and Pakistan in their bilateral relationship. As a result the possibility of war is always a reality in the Indo-Pakistani rivalry even in the non-nuclear environment. The asymmetric power relation between India and Pakistan provides two options for Pakistan: first match the asymmetry either through an arms race or through the extra-regional alliance and second maintain the balance by resorting to asymmetric warfare. Such has been the case thus far. The Pakistani conception that nuclear capability gave them a 'strategic equalizer' to Indian conventional superiority significantly dictates Pakistani strategic behaviour toward India[9]. When extra regional alliance in favour of Pakistan is not possible due to global considerations and when keeping alive the arms race is impossible due to Pakistan's domestic considerations; proxies remain, their only alternative.

Advocates of the nuclear South Asia refer to the US-Soviet Cold War relationships to explain security and stability in South Asia. The credible nuclear deterrence that the US and the USSR established in a global nuclear regime engendered caution during crisis situations, thereby establishing 'nuclear peace'. Scott D. Sagan makes his point that Indo-Pakistani nuclear rivalry differs from the US-Soviet rivalry in three prospects: first the South Asian nuclear arsenal is much smaller in size and less sophisticated; second civil-military relations in Pakistan where military have complete control over nuclear weapons in comparison to the assertive civilian control in both the US and Soviet Union; and third the differences in mutual understanding, proximity, and hostility between the two nuclear rivals. India and Pakistan share a common history, territorial dispute, geographical proximity and more than six decades of enduring hostility which was entirely absent in the US-Soviet nuclear rivalry. This is where the problem lies in establishing credible nuclear deterrence in Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations and that is what the security and stability of the region depends on. Whether Pakistan and India also could exhibit the similar nuclear behaviour requires an examination of their understandings of deterrence and the extent to which their nuclear doctrines and postures are consistent towards achieving deterrence.

In the meantime, the moratorium of further nuclear testing is a positive sign. In addition, Basrur argues: the most remarkable feature of the Indo-Pakistani nuclear relationship is the non-deployment of nuclear forces which have provided a measure of stability to an otherwise fractious and unsteady relationship[8]. These efforts indicate that India and Pakistan understand the 'nuclear weapon' and will act rationally.

In regard to the Brasstacks crisis, pessimists argue nuclear weapons played a part to erupt Brasstacks crisis 1987 and 1990 crisis. They argue 'Brasstacks Exercise' was an Indian military manoeuvre designed to provoke Pakistani aggression, in a guise of which to launch preventive strike against Pakistani nuclear facilities so as to cap the incipient Pakistani nuclear program, whereas the 1990 crisis is the result of Pakistani asymmetric warfare

against India, emboldened by the potential acquisition of a nuclear capability. In addition it is the Pakistani conclusion that they could cause catastrophic damage to India without huge political and material costs.

The post-May 1998 unfolding made the pessimists argument more powerful as a consequence of Kargil War 1998 and 2001-02 military standoff. Both could have taken them to the nuclear brinkmanship. South Asian security analysts are strongly divided on the impact of overt nuclearisation for the outbreak and resolution of Kargil War. The optimists argue that Kargil War in 1999 was obvious in hostile Indo-Pakistani relations and was by no means triggered by de facto nuclear capability. Whilst the pessimists maintain that Kargil War essentially is the confirmation of destabilizing effects of nuclear weapons.

Distinguishably, pessimists uphold that the Pakistani acquisition of deliverable nuclear weapons is both a cause and effect of the end of 28-years of 'long peace' between India and Pakistan. De facto nuclear capability encouraged Pakistani conflict behaviour as a consequence of robustness of the nuclear deterrence. In this premise, such a nuclear complacency swayed Pakistan that full scale Indian retaliation could be more convincingly averted than it did in the 1990 crisis.

With regards to the resolution of Kargil War, pessimists challenge the optimists' position that, nuclear weapons' deterrent effects have prevented conflict escalation and thereby made the region safer[8]. They argue conflict resolution in this case is more to do with non-nuclear factors than the nuclear factor. They believe that Pakistan withdrew its forces from Kargil under pressure due to President Bill Clinton's pledge 'to withdraw forces to the Pakistani side of the LoC[3]'. However, it was not in line with the ground reality because capture of the last major Indian military objective 'Tiger Hill' took place a good ten hours before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met with President Bill Clinton on 4 July, 1999[17].

Though nuclear danger may have prevented the escalation of the Kargil skirmish, Sagan claims the disturbing legacy of the Kargil conflict which demonstrated a possibility of war between nuclear states and organizational biases of Pakistani military to exist, and play a role in triggering future conflicts. Both were cautious in using conventional military during Kargil conflict; however Indian government also considered the escalation of the conflict.

As a consequence another much dangerous crisis was erupted only two years after the Kargil War when Pakistan backed terrorists attacked Indian Parliament in 2001. The 2001-02 military stand-off further supported the pessimists' view point that there would be a real danger of a nuclear Armageddon in South Asia. The Indian adoption of 'Cold Start Doctrine' on 28 April 2004 to counter Pakistani asymmetric strategy in Kashmir underpins Sagan's fright of nuclear fall-out in South Asia. In actuality, this doctrine allows India to mobilize quickly and undertake multiple retaliatory attacks in response to specific challenges posed by Pakistan's proxy wars in Kashmir[18]. Such a shift in Indian strategy is most

threatening of all. Even if the leaders act rationally there remains a possible escalation of conflict into nuclear war in the Indo-Pakistani realm.

Nuclear weapons were clearly in the background of the 2001-02 crisis. Truly if the terrorists involved in the parliament attack are backed by the Pakistani government, it could be argued that an Indian retaliatory attack is justifiable. Linking every incursion from Pakistani territory in such terrorist attack would be difficult to blame Pakistan. However, India's pressure for the handover of terrorists based in Pakistan fully satisfies the dilemma of origin. Though it complicates India's decision making to attack Pakistan for any terrorist attacks in India, essentially it constitutes another danger that a crisis could spiral to the nuclear level.

As a part of the international system, the South Asian sub-system always had impacts on the international system. Following the 9/11 terror attacks, the global strategic environment hugely altered. Accordingly, the regional strategic context also changed as the United States plunged into a global war on terror in Afghanistan. This put Pakistani asymmetric strategy towards India in peril. President Bush's warning post 9/11 to Pakistan that 'Pakistan would either side with the United States in the war against terrorism or else be treated as a terrorist state ... forced President Musharraf to abandon support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan[18].' India, as a result of this, enjoyed the diplomatic high ground not only in the region but also in the wider international system.

The possibility of nuclear weapons reaching the hands of the extremists looks slim in reality. However, with increasing extremist action against the establishment and the number of Al Qaeda operatives and supporters that live in Pakistan, nuclear dangers persist because of the organizational bias in Pakistan.

India's failure to resort to force in the wake of the 2002 Kaluchak massacre presents a critical puzzle despite their having all the capabilities to punish Pakistan. At this point of time, Carranza's argument holds value:

Nuclear weapons are great equalizer. India can only ignore this basic fact of international relations at its own peril. India's ... May 1998 nuclear tests pushed Pakistan further into nuclear club. By testing three nuclear-capable ballistic missile at the peak of the May-June 2002 crisis, Pakistan made the point that India's comparative advantage in conventional weapons has been nullified by the May 1998 nuclear tests[16].

The much improved Indo-Pakistani relations after 2001-02 crisis and Indian strategic patience toward terror attack thereafter also underpins the stabilizing effects on their otherwise hostile relations.

Since 2004, India and Pakistan are engaged in a 'composite dialogue' evolved from the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) signed in 1999. This was stalled after the Kargil War. In the following years, India and Pakistan made several agreements aimed at

avoiding the risks of an outbreak of nuclear war: the hotline agreement in 2005; the launch notification agreement; and an Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons signed in 2007. Even the number of terrorist incidents also significantly declined. These stabilizing efforts testify to Indo-Pakistani awareness of interdependence by the way of mutual deterrence and the risks of accidental war. Nevertheless, there has been no such substantive progress on the critical issue of Kashmir.

Relative decline of terrorist incidents in the immediate aftermath of the 2001-02 crisis invited arguments and counter arguments as to what extent nuclear deterrence has played a part in improving Indo-Pakistani relations.

Others believed that improvement in the broader Indo-Pakistani relationship is the result of the pacifying effects of the nuclear deterrence. However, the improvement is primarily the result of Pakistani policy shift towards Kashmir and not necessarily from nuclear deterrence. Arguably this is a consequence of shifting regional strategic environment and domestic security situation in Pakistan in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, thereby impeding Pakistan's ability to pursue its asymmetric strategy. Pakistani involvement in the counter insurgency/counter terrorism campaign at home diverted Pakistani attention and resources from Kashmir conflict[19].

From the Indian perspective, India's cost-benefit analysis prompted India to avoid conflict with Pakistan. Ganguly's assessment provides sufficient evidence on the same. With economic rise at hindsight, India could not afford any conflict with Pakistan that would be financially costly. Evidence of these are the Indian restraints to militants attacks from across Pakistan in the Indian territory; Diwali bombing in New Delhi in October 2005, railway station bombing in Mumbai in July 2006 and Mumbai terror attack 2008. Under other circumstances each of these could have easily led to Indo-Pakistani confrontation. Nevertheless, India took no rhetorical or military steps to threaten Pakistan as they have done in the past[19].

The assessment of the implications of nuclear weapons on the South Asian security environment in the past and at present offers to some degree an opportunity to extrapolate their likely effects on the region's future. The nuclear weapons have motivated new strategic developments in South Asia by facilitating the outbreak of Indo-Pakistani crises. Growing conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan and the Indian pursuit of a 'Cold Start Doctrine' against any Pakistan-backed militant activities in India fundamentally decreases Pakistani nuclear threshold. Such disorder in the regional balance of power increases the possibility of arms race, thereby increasing the likelihood of serious Indo-Pakistani conflict in the years to come.

In the wider global strategic context, Pakistan today is a frontline strategic ally in the US led global war on terror. In the post 9/11 scenario, the importance of Pakistan in the US

counter terrorism strategy requires stability in Pakistan, for it to take action against Islamist extremists. It is worth noting that the increasing willingness of the US to instigate surgical strikes on thought terrorist groups on Pakistani sovereign territory over recent months may indicate that the US is becoming impatient with Pakistani responses. With this in mind, the threat of US military capabilities further hampers the Pakistani security environment and as such will limit its desires to engage in boarder conflicts. Any increase in Indo-Pakistani conflicts in the region would jeopardize US led global war on terror in Afghanistan. Therefore, the arguments made above that the restraint shown by India during 2005, 2006 and 2008 terrorists attack in India is due to the fear from America makes sense. The delicate regional balance of power in South Asia after 9/11 is somehow maintained by the global focus in war on terror in Afghanistan, thus relative stability. For the time being the US is playing a starkly stabilising role in the region, though this may be expected to change in coming years given its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

As the end date for the NATO campaign in Afghanistan is set for 2014, Pakistani worries grow as its strategic significance decline. Unpredictability of its internal politics is likely to affect the regional security dynamics along-with Pakistan's increasing international alienation. This global concern would continue to restrain Indian and Pakistani decision makers from taking irrational decisions. Therefore extrapolating from the decade of Indo-Pakistani relations, it can be argued that in the near short term - Indo-Pakistani relation is likely to be stable and would not resort to major war until the end of US-led global war on terror in Afghanistan. The evaluation of their past nuclear behaviour, extrapolating suggests that future Indo-Pakistani conflict behaviour will be continuously dictated by the developing strategic environment in the region in which they operate though a return to the primary stabilizing factor of nuclearisation seems inevitable.

The nuclear factor has added a new dimension to the persisting irritants between India and Pakistan. They are engaged in a nuclear arms race to modernize update and strengthen their nuclear-deterrent capabilities[20]. The historic understanding of a bilateral nuclear deterrent, which stems from the lessons of the cold war, does not allow for the complexity of the multilateral South Asian environment. Western scholars' theoretical writings are inapplicable to India and Pakistan, including for instance Kenneth Waltz's argument that there is 'zero probability' of a major war among nuclear weapons states.

The Indo-Pakistan peace process hinges on the ability of Pakistan's political establishment to control terrorist groups from wreaking havoc in India. It is doubtful how much control the civilian government in Islamabad can exert, given that various terrorist outfits have vowed to continue their jihad in Kashmir.

The US-India nuclear pact in 2008 initiated another debate on stability in South Asia. Many argue that the pact not only destabilizes the nuclear non-proliferation regime, but also

offers incentives to other nuclear states to transfer nuclear technology to Pakistan and other threshold countries. China's decision to supply new nuclear reactors to Pakistan in 2010 and the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation's agreement with Pakistan for two nuclear reactors at the Chasma site justifies the consequences of US-India nuclear deal. This will give pace to nuclear arms race in the region and beyond.

V. Conclusion

South Asian security, albeit complex to define, depends more on Indo-Pakistani relationships than any other single factor. Purely in military terms, only Pakistan and India are the major state actors involved in conflicts historically. Arguably, since their independence India and Pakistan have shared a hostile past; a legacy that cripples any possibility of conflict resolution underpinning the intractability of the conflict. The territorial dispute over Kashmir amongst others has kept the prospects for conflict active in their bilateral relationship.

Evidently, South Asian conflict dynamics are situation-dependent. That said any unfolding strategic environment in the regional security framework contributes toward a development of a new policy and strategy on the part of the major stakeholders, either India or Pakistan. Pakistan, the weaker of the two, in particular attempted to achieve a regional balance of power through the equipment of qualitatively superior weapon systems, alliance with the extra-regional actors, proxy war tactics, nuclear weapons and its strategic application outwitting the asymmetric power disadvantage vis-à-vis India.

We have observed relatively calm Indo-Pakistani relationships in the last decade despite some minor and occasional incidents. If we consider the length of Indo-Pakistani relations starting from 1947(since independence) for the early 24 years, they fought three wars until 1971, in the last 42 years since then, they fought only one war in 1999(Kargil War)[3]. This highlights the state of relative security and stability in the region. Interestingly, this constitutes the period of Indo-Pakistani nuclearisation. By 1971, India had already embarked into the nuclear program and conducted peaceful nuclear tests in 1974. Pakistan on its part decided to embark upon a nuclear path in 1972. By the late 1980s both had reportedly achieved the nuclear capability before they demonstrated in May 1998. Therefore the question 'Is south Asia more or less secured with nuclear weapons?' becomes relevant.

During the nuclearisation process and post-nuclearisation period, frequently crisis situations developed between the two. Assessment of the eruption of crises and their resolution has been linked to nuclear weapons in complex ways. The 1988 Brasstacks crisis was a result of Indian motive to launch preventive strike against Pakistani nuclear facilities,

while the 1990 crisis being the result of Pakistani proxy war in Kashmir emboldened by the newly acquired nuclear capability. The role played by nuclear weapons could not only be attributed toward conflict resolution.

The nuclear doctrine and policy of both the rivals have security imperatives. Both intended to establish credible minimum deterrence against potential aggressor. However, they have adopted differing nuclear use policy; 'No First Use' policy for India and 'First Use' policy for Pakistan. In essence this intends to establish stable mutual deterrence. The ambiguity as to what level of attack by Pakistani extremists within India would terminate Indian patience and what would trigger the Pakistani use of nuclear arsenal put both India and Pakistan into another layer of security dilemma. The dilemma then in turn would have both stabilizing and destabilizing effects—stability/instability paradox; hence keeping alive the prospect of continued conflict.

In case of post May-1998 crises; the Kargil War and the 2001-02 military stand-off, like in the earlier crisis had roots to the nuclear weapons. Most importantly the declared nuclear capability for Pakistan was an incentive to strike India using its proxy war tactic in Kashmir and wider India without fearing the retaliatory counter attacks from powerful India. Despite potential for escalation into full-scale war the crisis ended on a limited note. Indian strategic patience during the Kashmir episode and the 2001-02 crisis points toward implications of nuclear weapons as conflict-deterrents. These incidents clearly demonstrate the role of nuclear weapons as both the stimulus of insecurity and instability as well as the sponsor of security and stability in the world's most volatile zone of conflict.

Having faced the critical situation in these crises, indeed both may have realized the real impacts of the nuclear fall out. Other first generation nuclear powers were equally concerned about the possibility of crisis developing into nuclear carnage. Consequently, India and Pakistan opted not to fight the unwinnable war facilitated by the United States. The US concerns were also connected to the role of Pakistan in the US led 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan. Therefore, the regional strategic environment configured by global concerns of war on terror that continues to endure into 2014 and the regional balance of power will keep peace between two regional nuclear rivals in the short term. However, medium and long terms dynamics are likely to shift as the US withdraws from Afghanistan and the two rivals fall back on their nuclear deterrent.

Augmenting that, the structural causes such as the status/hold of the government in Pakistan, poor governance, inequality and social exclusion would continue to act as triggers. The Indo-Pakistani relationship embeds conflict as primary element of their interactions. Therefore the possibility of war is real between the two. However, the threat of nuclear war and international engagement would keep crises between the two limited in scale and scope.

Overall this paper has argued that nuclear weapons ultimately are instruments of war, and

there is no guarantee that they will not be used in a future Indo-Pakistani conflict. As nuclear possessors, the two states understand the havoc that nuclear weapons can create in the event of any nuclear show down between them. This has forced them to be rational actors in any crisis situation amidst the stability/instability paradox. In the mean time both have developed operational nuclear forces with relative degree of survivability and credible delivery capability; thus instituting robust nuclear deterrence. Therefore, it is believed that the optimists' final result view point will continue to stand in future conflicts between India and Pakistan. That said the possibility of crisis situations unravelling to the nuclear level cannot be ignored given the variety and complexity of the non-nuclear factors that remain the real threat.

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